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ABSTRACT

This student guide is directed at the adult student who petitions for college credits based on prior experiential learning. It will assist such adults in maximizing the value of their prior experiences in relation to educational goals and successfully obtaining appropriate credit. The reader is led step by step through the process of identifying learning outcomes, relating them to educational goals, documenting experience, measuring learning outcomes, and requesting credit or recognition. (Author/MV)

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Assessing Prior Learning- A CAEL Student Guide

Aubrey Forrest

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ASSESSING PRIOR LEARNING--
A CAEL STUDENT GUIDE

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Cooperative Assessment of Experiential Learning

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Note To The Reader

This *Guide* is primarily for those adults who have been out of school for several years and who are considering entering or returning to a college or university. If you are one of these adults, you should be aware of an important new trend in American higher education. More and more colleges and universities are receptive to the idea of awarding credit, advanced standing, or some other kind of recognition for the learning acquired through noncollege experiences prior to entering or returning to the institution. Such learning, frequently called *prior experiential learning*, may result from such activities as work experience, volunteer work, community service, travel, military experience, and homemaking. Throughout this *Guide* we will refer to *prior experiential learning* as learning that has resulted from your experiences since high school[1] and that occurred when you were not enrolled in or under the supervision of a college or university.

If you are among these adults who are entering or returning to college, and if you are interested in receiving credit or recognition for prior experiential learning, this *Guide* is designed to assist you to maximize the amount of credit or other type of recognition that you might receive from a college or university. In the process, you will also learn something about yourself, become better able to plan your degree program, find out how others may judge you, and become better able to evaluate the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of others.

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[1] Throughout this *Guide*, we will be asking you to focus on your experiences since high school. However, you may have had some meaningful, in-depth experiences before you graduated from high school that resulted in college-level learning. If so, you should consider requesting credit or recognition for such experiences and learning.

Any process used to determine how much credit or other type of recognition you are to receive for your prior experiential learning is known as *assessment*. Usually, there are several steps in an assessment process. These steps are discussed in detail in this *Guide*. We will be discussing ways in which you can identify the kinds of prior experiential learning that might be eligible for college credit or recognition. We will help you understand how to relate your prior experiential learning to what you want to learn. Assistance is also provided by suggesting ways for you to verify to others and to yourself what you have learned. Then we will suggest some ways to put together all this information and communicate it to college officials so that you may initiate your request for credit or other type of recognition.

This formal written communication, requesting credit or recognition and providing supporting information, is known as a *portfolio*. At many colleges, the portfolio also includes information about the student's entire proposed degree program. The reason for this is that many colleges award credit or recognition for prior experiential learning only if such learning can be shown to contribute to or somehow support the student's degree program.

Preparing a portfolio is not an easy process. It will cost you a great deal of time if done correctly. Despite the difficulty, there are a number of important benefits that will result regardless of the amount of credit or recognition you may receive.

As an adult contemplating entering or returning to college, it is important for you to have a realistic understanding of your present levels of competence. With such a realistic appraisal of what you know and can do and what you value, you can use this information to plan further educational activities leading toward a degree. It would be difficult indeed for you to move from where you are now, in terms of learning, toward some important educational goal that you have set for yourself, if you do not have a realistic picture of what you have already learned. For example, you may wish to become a certified public accountant. In order to do this, you will need to pass the CPA examination. In order to plan appropriately the learning that you must acquire, you need an accurate assessment of how much you now know and can do in accounting. Perhaps you already know a considerable amount about accounting because of some work experience that you have had and/or some reading that you have done on your own.

Another advantage of undergoing a systematic assessment of your prior experiential learning is that it offers you an opportunity to understand the assessment procedure itself. If you understand the assessment procedure, you will gain some valuable information about how you can go about obtaining a good assessment of yourself in the future. This information about assessment can be of great value to you as you continue to develop after you leave college.

You are constantly attempting to evaluate yourself realistically as you progress through the various areas of your life: work, recreation, civic activities, family, etc. You need this information to continue to plan your life effectively. As you attempt to evolve realistic appraisals of yourself, it is important to know the best way to go about this. As you have undoubtedly noted from your own experience, people frequently underestimate or overestimate themselves or simply do not have any idea about their current levels of competence. If you are confident that you have an accurate and realistic perception of yourself, you will find that such confidence will produce a great deal of personal satisfaction as you continue to develop both in an academic setting and in acquiring competence through nonacademic experiences in the future.

You are also constantly being evaluated by other people in your professional work as well as in avocational activities. If you know good assessment procedures, you will be able to;

1. provide valid information to others in order to prove what you know and can do;

2. suggest to others how they might proceed in their attempts to fairly and accurately evaluate you;

3. make informed judgments as to whether or not the procedures that are being used by others are the best and most appropriate available.

If you are placed in a supervisory role in your work or civic activities, you will be called upon to evaluate those persons acting under your direction. Knowing effective assessment principles and techniques will allow you to do an accurate and fair job in evaluating others. This capability could be especially important to you as you attempt to progress in your chosen vocation.

Since the assessment of prior experiential learning is a new idea for most colleges, it may be necessary for you to take the initiative in requesting such assessment. Most colleges offering credit or recognition for prior experiential learning do not have well-defined procedures for such assessment. Frequently, it does not occur to many college officials, including admissions officers, to suggest to an adult student that a thorough assessment of prior experiential learning be undertaken. For these reasons, preparing a portfolio may be a good idea even if your college does not expect or require it.

Finally, if you are in possession of a portfolio, developed as we have described in this *Guide*, you will have an invaluable document to carry with you in the future as you apply for jobs or further educational opportunities.

Introduction

Some General Guidelines

Let us assume that you believe (as do most adults) that you have learned many things through noncollege experiences that are equivalent to what is taught in a college or university and that you would like to receive credit or recognition for what you have learned. If you decide to approach a college in order to receive credit or recognition, the first thing you will probably be asked to do is to identify specifically what it is that you have learned from experience. This is important to keep in mind because colleges generally do not award credit for the experience itself, but rather for the knowledge, skills, and/or values you have attained as a *result* of the experiences you have had.

It is important to keep in mind also that the amount of credit or recognition will usually not be based on the number of years of experience you have had. Again, the key point is how much you have learned, not how much time you have spent in an activity. For example, a man may have had 12 years of experience as a salesman. Most colleges will not award credit simply on the basis of that 12 years of experience, but will ask the man to demonstrate what he learned about salesmanship as a result of those years of experience. The reason for this is that the man in this case may have learned little about salesmanship beyond his first year on the job. It could be that he has not had 12 years of learning experience, but that he has had one year of learning experience 12 times.

After you have identified what you have learned through experience, the learning for which you may receive credit or recognition will have to meet certain guidelines or criteria set by your college because not everything you may have learned will be worthy of college credit or recognition. The guidelines generally used by the colleges include those listed on the following page.

General Guidelines for Identifying Creditable Learning

- The learning should be *equivalent to college-level work in terms of quality*. You may demonstrate this in one or more of the following ways:

  1. by relating your learning to subject areas traditionally taught in colleges;

  2. by indicating that what you have learned is at a level of achievement equal to what is normally taught in college;

  3. by comparing your learning with groups who have completed college-level work;

  4. by relating your learning to a personal goal that might require college-level learning;

  5. by identifying your learning as that normally acquired after one reaches adulthood;

  6. by identifying your learning as that normally acquired after high school and expected for professional acceptance.

- The learning should have *general applicability* outside of the specific situation in which it was acquired. For example, you may have learned tha specific procedures for processing personnel applications at one company. If you also learned principles and techniques that would apply at several other companies, then you might expect to receive college credit or recognition.

- The learning should include both a *theoretical and practical understanding* of a subject area. Even though you may not have applied the the knowledge you possess in a practical situation, you should be aware of how it might be applied. If you have learned how to do something, you should understand why you are able to do what you do. You should not expect to receive college credit or recognition for mere application of a manual skill or a narrowly prescribed routine or procedure.

- The learning should be *evaluated by an expert*. You should be able to describe precisely what you know and can do and what appropriate attitudes you have developed as a result of your experiences and be able to demonstrate to an expert in the field that you currently possess the learning that you have claimed. Such an expert should be able to objectively measure and evaluate the learning that has occured.

- You may be required to demonstrate that there is some *relationship between what you have learned and your proposed program of study* at the college or university in which you have elected to enroll. You may be asked to demonstrate an ability to integrate "old" learning with proposed "new" learning.

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Illustrations of Adults Seeking Credit and Probable Evaluations

To assist you in understanding the kinds of prior experiential learning that might receive credit or recognition at a college or university, let us look now at six typical cases of adults who might seek such credit or recognition. As you read these cases, think about similar experiences you have had. Reflect on the general guidelines we have just discussed. Keep in mind that colleges generally do not award credit or recognition for experience itself, but rather for the demonstrated learning that has resulted from the experience. Remember, also, that not every experience will yield learning that will merit college credit or recognition. You will want to become very familiar with these cases because we will be referring to them frequently throughout this *Guide*.

Using the general guidelines, let us make some estimate as to how these six people might fare if they were to apply for college credit or recognition for their prior experiential learning. Of course, actual decisions would depend upon the facts of the individual cases and upon the policies of the individual colleges.

Laura

Laura is 28 years old. She is married to an anthropologist. They have no children. From an early hobby, ceramics, she started her own business, which has grown and currently employs 25 part-time workers. She also discovered that she has a talent in writing and has had several fictional pieces published in children's magazines. She has read widely in American and English drama and goes to the theater frequently. She also spends a considerable amount of her leisure time walking in the parks in her community. She likes to talk with friends about what she has seen and thought about on her walks.

Before meeting her husband, Laura fell in and out of love several times and considers that she has learned a lot about herself and human nature as a result of these experiences. She and her husband have traveled extensively in the United States and have visited a number of archeological sites. She enjoys talking with her husband about the site visits and does extensive reading prior to each visit.

Laura has managed to accumulate 33 quarter hours of college credit by taking courses part-time at a local community college. She now wishes to transfer this credit, receive recognition for her prior experiential learning, and work toward a baccalaureate degree with dual emphasis in business administration and ceramic production.

Probable Evaluation. Laura will probably have creditable knowledge and skill in the areas of ceramics, business management, prose writing, and American and English drama. Although being in love is a highly significant human experience, what she has learned from these experiences is highly subjective and generally not subject to evaluation by others. She likely will not receive credit or recognition toward her degree for these experiences. Also, although her walks in the park have undoubtedly been very significant to her in thinking through her problems and enjoying the scenery, she will have a great deal of difficulty in identifying in this experience knowledge and skills that have a theoretical base and/or are of college-level quality. She may be able to demonstrate some basic knowledge in the area of anthropology. With a little additional reading to fill the gaps in her knowledge, she may receive recognition for knowledge in this area.

Jim

Jim is 48 years old. Several years ago, he lost his wife and two children in an automobile accident in which he was charged with negligent driving. Having come through this experience, learned to live with his guilt by undergoing therapy, and adjusted to his new life style, he feels that the experience has taught him quite a bit about himself and other people. He is presently the personnel manager of a local plant of a nationally recognized company that manufactures radios and television sets. He rose to his present position after 11 years in personnnel administration with his present company. He has written three articles for a professional journal in the field of personnel management. For three of the 11 years that he has worked for his present company, he lived and worked in Brazil. In preparation for this job he used Spanish and Portuguese records to learn to speak these languages. While in Brazil, he traveled extensively in South America and feels that he has learned a considerable amount about cultural differences.

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For 20 years, Jim has had an interest in modern architecture. He has traveled extensively in the United States, visiting well-known examples of modern architecture. He has read widely in the field. He has served as a lay leader and board member in his local church. He has read pertinent church literature and participated in an adult study group over a six-year period.

Jim now would like to go to college and pursue a liberal arts degree. He feels that he should receive substantial credit for the learning that he has obtained outside of a formal learning setting.

Probable Evaluation. Jim will undoubtedly find a college that will give him appropriate recognition or credit in the areas of personnel management, foreign language, and professional writing. With some additional reading he will probably receive some credit in architecture. If he can demonstrate that the leadership and management skills developed as a result of his experience in his local church are generally applicable to other situations, he could receive some credit for what he has learned in that setting. Although the loss of his immediate family was undoubtedly a significant and traumatic experience, he will probably not be able to convey to others the insights that he gained about himself and other people, nor will he be able to demonstrate the applicability of the knowledge gained through that experience to other situations or settings.

Sharon

Sharon is 38 years old. At the age of 18 she entered the local community college and pursued a general liberal arts program with no clear career objective. She received an AA degree at age 20 and married. Since then, she has been a homemaker for herself, her husband, and two children. The children, a boy and a girl, are 17 and 15 years old respectively. Throughout the time of rearing her children, she has read numerous books and articles and has discussed them with her pediatrician. The pediatrician has recommended much of the reading that Sharon has done.

Sharon has also read extensively in the consumer economics field. Decorating is another area in which she has read and applied much of her reading to the home which she and her husband own. She is a skilled clothing designer. She sews and has won awards for the clothing that she has constructed. She enjoys gourmet cooking. Her husband frequently comments on how much he values her companionship and support. He says that he could not have achieved the success in his career that he currently enjoys without her help.

Sharon participates in a number of civic organizations. She has been president of the PTA and vice-president of the local chapter of the League for Women Voters. In her spare time, she enjoys playing tennis.

Sharon's children are growing up and she finds herself less content with homemaking. She is not sure what career, if any, she would like to pursue. She feels that enrolling in a B.A. degree program will help her find an area of interest. She hopes her experiential learning will count toward the degree.

Probable Evaluation. Although raising two children has been an important part of Sharon's life, she should not expect college credit for that activity alone. However, since she has attempted, through reading and discussion, to understand the concepts of the rearing of children, she may be able to demonstrate creditable knowledge at the college level in the areas of general psychology and child development. Since the college will likely not accept her husband's evaluation as being objective, she may not be able to demonstrate her competence as a marriage partner, even though this has been an important part of her life experience. It is likely, however, that she will find a college that will award her credit in the fields of home economics, organizational leadership, and tennis.

Ted

Ted is 35 years of age, is married, and has three children. Since reading for and passing the appropriate state examinations, he has worked for seven years as a real estate salesman. He also worked his way through a self-instructional textbook in salesmanship. He has participated in three on-the-job training workshops totaling 60 contact hours.

Ted is a member of Toastmasters International and has given a number of speeches to service clubs. He is president of the local chapter of the Junior Chamber of Commerce and has served as president of the local chapter of the Lions Club. He also serves as an elected member of the City Council.

For nine years, Ted has read widely in photography during his leisure time. He presently owns $2,500 worth of basic equipment. He has won several awards at amateur photography showings and has had two "one-man" shows in his home community. Over the past six years, he has had considerable experience in backpacking and camping. He has read numerous books and articles about the subject. Two years ago he took a course in survival training. Once, he and two other men survived for one week in a wooded, mountainous area living "off the land." He has many friends in his home community and is considered by them to be an excellent host when entertaining at home.

Ted now wants to move up into a management position within his present real estate firm. Company policy requires that he have at least an Associate Degree in order to hold a management position. Ted wants to enter the local community college to pursue a degree, and feels that his past learning should count toward his degree.

Probable Evaluation. Ted may be able to receive college credit in the areas of real estate appraisal, sales, photography, camping, and public speaking. His knowledge about child development is probably not at a college level. His competence as a marriage partner is likely not open to evaluation by an expert nor of general applicability, and probably he has not attempted to learn any general principles. Also, his skill as a good host is probably not a college-level competence, nor does it have a theoretical base.

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June

June is 32 years old and is single. She took a secretarial program in a business college immediately after graduating from high school. She worked as a secretary for five years and then accepted a full-time position as an office supervisor for three years. She had a drinking problem which began in high school and became increasingly worse during the time that she worked as a secretary. The pressures of serving as an office supervisor greatly increased her drinking until the consumption of alcohol began to adversely affect her performance on the job. Finally, she took the advice of her doctor and was hospitalized for a brief time. She then joined Alcoholics Anonymous and has not had an alcoholic drink since her hospitalization. She feels that she learned a considerable amount about herself and human behavior as a result of her bout with alcoholism. Following her hospitalization, she resumed working as a secretary and also has worked for the past five years as a volunteer aide in the psychiatric ward of a general hospital. She has taken in-service courses and has worked closely with a psychiatric social worker.

During the last four years, June has served as a volunteer in the annual fund drive for the hospital. She rose from the level of worker to team captain in this annual fund drive. She helped to write a procedural manual for conducting the fund drive. She has read several standard textbooks and numerous articles and pamphlets on the general subject of abnormal psychology.

June now wishes to prepare for graduate school in psychology. In order to be admitted to graduate school, she will need to obtain a baccalaureate degree. June feels that her learning should receive credit that could be applied toward her degree.

Probable Evaluation. June may receive creditable recognition for the subject areas of abnormal psychology, secretarial science, office supervision, and fund raising. Because her experience in helping to write a procedural manual is likely too narrow and lacks generalizability, she might not receive college credit for writing the manual. Her effort in overcoming alcoholism, while a signigficant experience, probably does not produce any learning that can be openly and fairly evaluated because of its subjective nature.

Bill

Bill is 29 years old and single. Immediately upon graduation from high school he joined the Air Force. While in the Air Force, he assisted in running a post exchange. He feels that he learned a considerable amount about bookkeeping and inventory control while in the Air Force. For two years he was stationed in Germany.

For the past seven years, Bill has operated a small gift shop which he founded. He feels he has learned advertising and merchandising through his experience and through reading and taking noncredit seminars. He has traveled extensively in Europe to purchase items for his store. He knows French and German well enough to transact business in these languages. He knows a smattering amount of three other languages. He feels he has learned quite a bit about cultural differences and some of the history of Europe. He has also become interested in and is accomplished at gourmet cooking.

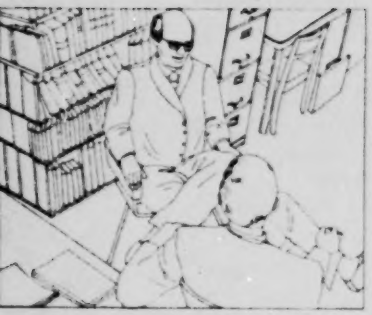
Bill now wishes to pursue a Bachelor's of Business Administration Degree at a local state university. He feels that his learning should be recognized in meeting the requirements for this degree.

Probable Evaluation. Bill could receive credit for the subject areas of French and German, accounting, inventory control, and small business management. His superficial knowledge of the three other languages and of cultural differences and history will probably not be equivalent to college-level work unless supplemented by further study. It is possible he will receive credit for his skill in gourmet cooking.

Overview of Procedures

Now that you have a general idea about the kinds of prior experiential learning for which some individuals may seek credit and for which some colleges may be willing to give credit or recognition, let us look at how colleges go about assessing such learning. First, we will give you an overview of these procedures, and then, in later chapters of this *Guide*, we will fill in with specific detailed information and suggestions.

Regardless of the administrative set-up of a program for crediting prior learning or the policies that govern the program, there tend to be certain general steps that are commonly followed in most institutions from the time a student first inquires about the possibility of obtaining credit until the credit is actually granted. The steps vary among institutions, but they generally include such procedures as those listed below. Under Step 1 we have provided a checklist of questions to which you will want answers before proceeding to later chapters in this guide.



Step 1

IN A PRELIMINARY CONTACT, THE STUDENT OBTAINS INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROGRAM AND PROVIDES INFORMATION CONCERNING HIS/HER EXPERIENCES FROM WHICH LEARNING WAS ACQUIRED AND FOR WHICH CREDIT OR RECOGNITION WILL BE SOUGHT.

Questions you should ask during this step include:

a. Does the institution give credit or recognition for prior experiential learning? _____

b. Am I eligible for admission to the program? _____

c. If the answer to "a" is "yes," what form does the credit or recognition take:

   Academic credit? _____

   Advanced standing? _____

   Placing a description of learning on a transcript? _____

   Checking off your achievements on a list of competences required for graduation? _____

d. What types of prior experiential learning are credited or recognized? _____

e. Does it appear likely that my experiences would generate learning that would warrant undertaking the assessment process? _____

f. Are there limits to the amount of credit or recognition I may receive? _____

g. If I am awarded credits for prior learning, when will such credits be placed on my transcript:

   Immediately? _____

   If and when I want to transfer to another institution? _____

   Only after I meet all other graduation requirements? _____

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h. What has been the experience of former students of the institution who have sought to transfer credit or recognition awarded for prior experiential learning?

i. What fees are charged?

j. When should I begin the assessment process:

Before I register for courses at the college?

While enrolled in course work?

After I have completed some course work?

What are the advantages and disadvantages of these starting times?

k. What assistance is provided in the form of guidelines, workshops and/or counselors?

l. What printed forms are to be used by me?

m. Who may evaluate my learning:

College faculty?

Staff members related to an assessment office?

Experts external to the institution? _____

Work supervisors? _____

Others who have known me and are qualified to make an evaluation of my learning? _____

n. How and by whom are credit or recognition decisions made? How may decisions be appealed? _____

o. If the institution has student portfolios on file, may I see them in order to get an idea of what to include in mine? _____

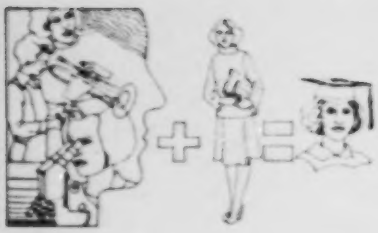
p. Will the college help me to get together with others who have completed the assessment process? _____

Step 2

THE STUDENT THEN IDENTIFIES THE PRIOR EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING THAT MAY BE CREDITABLE OR RECOGNIZABLE.

This step is fully described in Chapter II of this *Guide*.

Step 3



THE STUDENT MAY BE ASKED TO RELATE THE PRIOR EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING TO DEGREE OBJECTIVES.

There is considerable variation among institutions in the extent to which this step is required of the student. If your institution requires this step, you will find important information about it in Chapter III. If your institution does not require this step, you may wish to review Chapter III, but not complete the instructions contained in it. Frequently, a college will make the development of a degree program the first or second step.

Step 4

THE STUDENT MAY BE ASKED TO SOLICIT AND COLLECT DOCUMENTATION OR VERIFICATION OF LEARNING EXPERIENCES.

Again, since institutions vary as to the importance they attach to this step, you may or may not wish to follow the ideas and suggestions contained in Chapter IV.

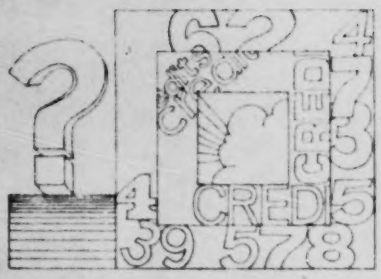
Step 5

MOST INSTITUTIONS DO EXPECT SOME MEASUREMENT OR EVIDENCE OF THE PRIOR EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING YOU IDENTIFIED IN STEP 2 ABOVE.

This step is fully described in Chapter V. You will find that collecting such information is necessary to evaluate your learning and justify your claim for credit or recognition.

Step 6

THE STUDENT DECIDES HOW MUCH CREDIT OR RECOGNITION TO REQUEST FOR HIS/HER PRIOR EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING.



This step is fully discussed in Chapter VI.

Step 7

COLLATERAL WITH THE PREVIOUS FIVE STEPS, THE STUDENT ASSEMBLES A PORTFOLIO THAT SERVES AS A PETITION TO THE INSTITUTION FOR CREDIT OR RECOGNITION.

The specific components of a portfolio are described in Chapter VII.

Step 8

COLLATERAL WITH STEPS 2-7 ABOVE, THE STUDENT SEEKS FACULTY GUIDANCE ON HOW TO ASSEMBLE THE NECESSARY MATERIALS.

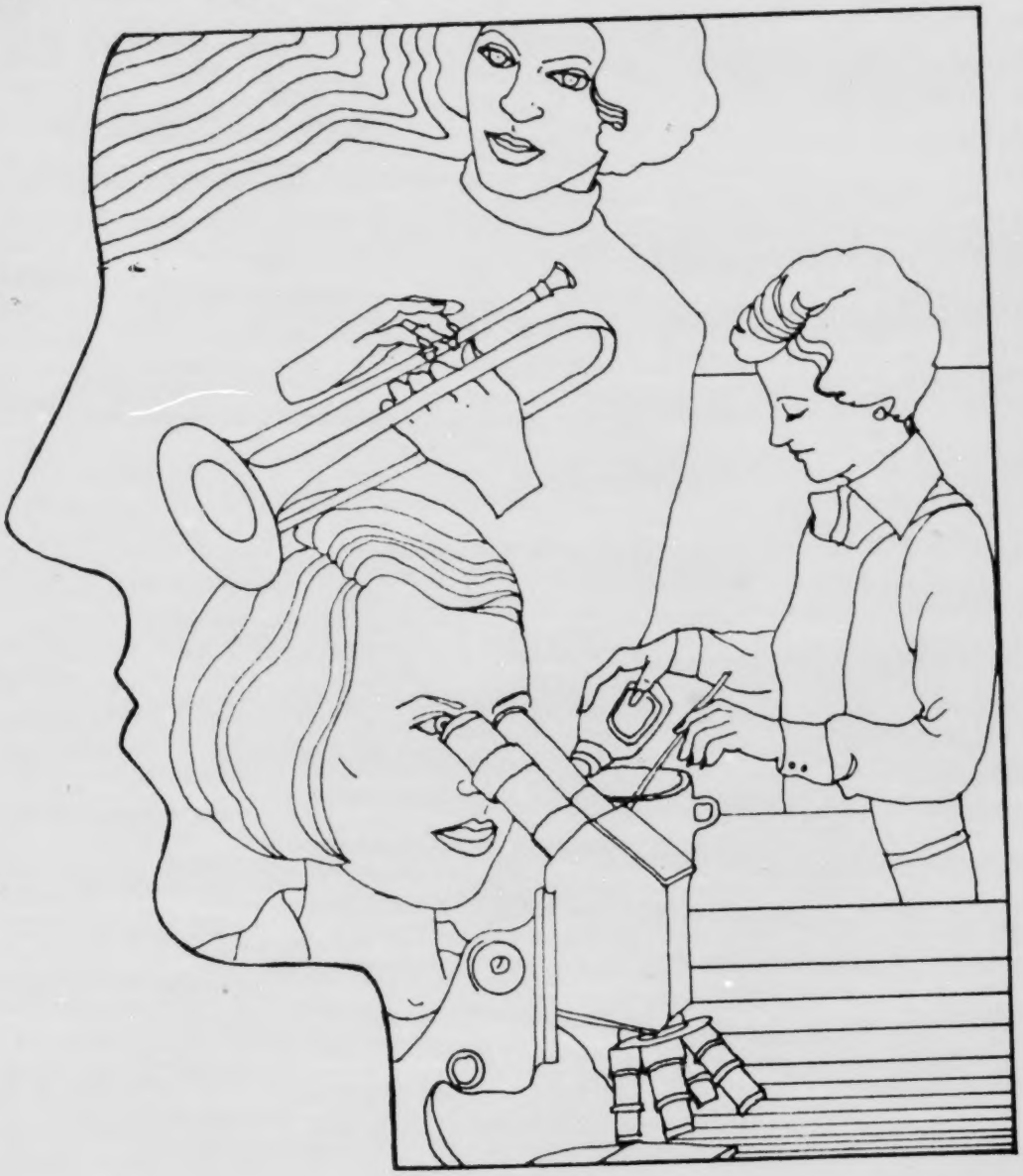
The extent of such help may vary from brief written instructions to a group seminar to individual instruction. In any case, you may expect that your success will be dependent on the amount of initiative you take on your own behalf. Sometimes you may have to make a formal request for assistance.

Step 9

THE ACTUAL EVALUATION OF THE STUDENT'S PORTFOLIO IS CARRIED OUT BY AN OFFICIAL OR A COMMITTEE REPRESENTING THE INSTITUTION.

You may or may not have the opportunity to be present during the deliberations. You may be permitted to supplement your portfolio presentation with an oral presentation. Following this formal evaluation you will be notified about the amount of credit or recognition, if any, granted to you. If you do not agree with the decision, you probably will be given opportunity to appeal to a higher authority.

II How To Identify and Describe What You Have Learned Through Prior Experiential Learning and How You Learned It



List of Significant Life Experiences

My list

(Number the experiences for later reference.)

As a first step in this process, we suggest that you use the right side of the following pages to write a special kind of autobiography. On these pages list your *significant life experiences* since high school for which you have not received college credit. In your mind, review each of the years since graduation from high school and recall what was happening to you during those times. At this point you should not be concerned about specifying what you learned, but only with listing those experiences in your life that are of importance to you because you

1. think you learned a lot,
2. are pleased with what you were able to achieve,
3. received appreciation and/or recognition from other people,
4. expended considerable time, energy, or money,
5. found the experiences very enjoyable, or
6. found the experiences very painful.

The purpose of this first step is simply to place on paper an outline of your significant life experiences. Remember that what is important is not merely to list positions you have held or recognitions you have received, but is rather to ensure that you include experiences which you believe have been significant to your personal development and learning.

Now, take another look at your list of significant life experiences. Add to it any significant life experiences you may have omitted that the following list of adult activities might bring to your mind:

1. *Work* would include any activity for which you were paid, including military service.

2. *Homemaking* would include those activities related to child rearing, home maintenance, marriage, etc.

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3. *Volunteer experiences* would include internships or apprenticeships without pay, community aid, community activities, political activities, church activities, service organizations, elective offices held without pay, volunteer work in social service agencies, time contributed to supervising youth organizations, etc.

4. *Noncredit courses and seminars* would include in-service training, workshops, clinics, conferences, discussion groups, evening courses, lecture series, television or radio courses, correspondence courses, etc. (for which no academic credit is given).

5. *Travel* would include study tours, significant vacations and business trips, living for extended times in various parts of the country or abroad, participating as a worker or volunteer in an American sub-culture setting, etc.

6. *Recreational activities and hobbies* would include performing in a musical group, acting or working in a community theater, sports, artistic activities, fiction and nonfiction writing, public speaking, nature interests, attending plays and concerts, visiting art museums, restoration of furniture, clothing construction and design, gardening, or any other leisure time activity pursued for the purpose of personal satisfaction and enjoyment.

7. *Independent reading, viewing, and listening* would include in particular any subject areas in which you have done intensive reading for which you have not received college credit, as well as significant articles read, television programs which you have viewed, or radio programs to which you have listened. Significant plays or movies may also be of importance.

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8. *Conversations with experts.* List any significant extensive and intensive conversations with experts which you have had since you graduated from high school and which were not related to any activities for which you have already received college or university credit.

In addition to listing significant life experiences, you will probably want to include brief descriptions of series of small life experiences which, when added up, have contributed much to your learning.

Another approach to use in making your list would be to read the course descriptions in five or six college and university catalogs. Write down any significant experiences you have had in subject areas commonly taught in these institutions. A similar approach is to recall subject areas which you have heard or read about being offered at a college or university.

You may find the approaches listed in Appendix A helpful.

Learning Descriptions

Once you have completed your list of significant life experiences, you will be ready to proceed to the next step in the process of identifying and describing what you have learned through prior experience and how you learned it. This next step is to identify from the experiences *specifically* what you have learned, in terms of the knowledge, skills, and values that you have acquired through your experience. You are being asked to identify what you know, what you can do, and what valuable attitudes you developed as a result of your experiences.

Your college may not require you to clearly identify the specific learning that has resulted from your experiences. You will, however, find such a step important to you for two reasons:

1. You will be able to communicate more effectively to college officials what it is that you are asking to have assessed.

2. You will find it easier to proceed through the measurement and evaluation steps in assessment. We will be discussing these in detail in Chapters V and VI.

Remember that this is a critical step in your efforts to maximize the amount of credit or recognition which you wish to receive for prior experiential learning. It is advisable at this stage to seek consultation with college officers in order to understand how to identify the outcomes of your experience in such a way as to communicate in the best way what you have learned.

AN IMPORTANT ISSUE THAT YOU WILL WANT TO CLARIFY WITH YOUR COLLEGE AT THIS POINT IS: Are you to identify only that learning which you currently possess and can now demonstrate, or may you identify learning which you once held but since have forgotten? What about skills you once had but can no longer demonstrate, or important attitudes once held that have since changed? Some colleges will award credit or recognition for only those skills and that knowledge that you currently possess. For example, if you studied statistics 20 years ago but can no longer solve basic problems, the college may not award you credit or recognition in statistics even though you once held a job in which you were competent in solving such problems.

To assist you in identifying your learning, your college may provide you with a list or a set of categories to organize your presentation. There are several ways this may be done. Here are four suggestions:

1. The college may require that you identify specific courses in the college catalog, the content of which you feel you have already mastered. You will need to read each course description carefully and, in some cases, consult the instructor of the course you are considering listing in order to be certain you understand what content is normally covered in the course. If there is no course in the catalog covering the subject area for which you are seeking credit or recognition, check to see if you may use an "independent study" or "field experience" (or similar designation). It is not unusual in cases such as this that you will *not* be able to receive credit for some of your learning because the college does not offer courses identical to what you have learned. It is also possible that you will be limited to receiving credit for learning that matches the courses that are part of your proposed degree program.

2. If the college only requires that you describe how your learning is equivalent in content and level of attainment to courses in the catalog, you should identify your learning by relating it to the subject areas by which the courses are divided in the catalog (e.g., accounting, biology, psychology, etc.). You may be asked to label your learning in terms of specific college courses (e.g., public speaking, trigonometry, abnormal psychology, etc.) or in your own terms (e.g., skill in making effective sales talks, knowledge of application of parliamentary procedure in a volunteer organization, etc.). Remember that the college may have established criteria for the learning that is likely to receive credit and/or recognition. If the criteria are not provided by the college or if they appear to be vague, you may find it useful to refer to the criteria listed earlier in this *Guide* (p.7).

3. A process similar to that in item 2 would be followed if your college requires that the learning be equivalent to the college's graduation requirements or that it be related to broad competence areas required or suggested by the college.

4. If you are free to design your own educational program or if it is not the practice of your college to provide a list of specific courses, competences, or competence categories, you may find the sample listings on the next page useful as you attempt to organize a description of your experiential learning.

Sample Learning Category Listing No. 1

a. Vocational Competences - the skills, knowledge, and values needed to achieve economic independence and personal satisfaction through gainful employment.

b. Interpersonal Competences - the skills, knowledge, and values needed to instruct, persuade, and understand other people.[2]

c. Problem-Solving Competences - the skills, knowledge, and values needed to see relationships, to summarize, to interpret, to plan, to organize, to integrate, and to create solutions to problems.

d. Civic Competences - the skills, knowledge, and values needed to function effectively as a self-governing member of a self-governing community.

e. Domestic Competences - the skills, knowledge, and values needed to rear children, manage a home, and maintain an intimate, supportive relationship with a spouse.

f. Creative and Recreational Competences - the skills, knowledge, and values needed to feel renewed, enjoy, and understand oneself.

g. Value Clarification Competences - the skills, knowledge, and values needed to identify and understand the development and consequence of values and resulting choices.

Sample Learning Category Listing No. 2

a. Basic Communication - reading, composition, listening, speaking, nonverbal, etc.

b. Quantitative operations and systematic analysis.

c. Social Behavior - sociology, economics, business, political science, psychology, anthropology, etc.

d. Natural Sciences - biology, physics, chemistry, astronomy, earth science, etc.

e. Humanities - literature, philosophy, history, etc.

f. Fine Arts - art, music, drama, etc.

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[2]For special assistance in identifying and measuring interpersonal skills see *Learning and Assessing Interpersonal Skills--A CAEL Student Guide* by Breen, Donlon, and Whitaker.

To illustrate the fourth suggested approach to organizing your learning, let us return to the case of Jim and assume that he chose Sample Learning Category Listing No. 2 above. His presentation might look like this:

1. Basic Communication
    a. Knowledge and application of interviewing techniques
    b. Public speaking skills
    c. Writing for a professional audience
    d. Business correspondence skills
    e. Oral communication in Spanish
    f. Oral communication in Portuguese
2. Quantitative Operations and Systematic Analysis
    a. Problem-solving competence
    b. Knowledge of statistical procedures
    c. Knowledge of budgetary procedures for voluntary organizations
3. Social Behavior
    a. Knowledge of psychological testing
    b. Use of parliamentary procedures in conducting meetings
    c. Supervisory skills
    d. Training and instructional skills
4. Natural Sciences
5. Humanities
    a. Knowledge of the basic tenets of a Protestant Christian religion
6. Fine Arts
    a. Art appreciation for personal enjoyment

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Whatever approach you use, you should develop, on separate sheets of paper or on forms provided by your college, a list of the specific subject areas in which you have acquired learning. Such a list is a good start in identifying what you have learned, but it alone will probably not adequately communicate to college officials what you know and can do and what values you now hold. Therefore, the next step is to take each subject area term (interviewing, public speaking, problem-solving, etc.) and build around each term a complete sentence that clearly identifies what you know and can do.

Again, there are several approaches you might use in constructing such a sentence:

1. If you are required to relate your learning to specific courses in a college catalog, your sentences should parallel the corresponding course description in the catalog. For example, June's learning in the subject area of abnormal psychology might be described this way:

   I know the varieties of abnormal behavior found in human beings, including, for example, neuroses, psychotic conditions, alcoholism, drug addiction, personality disorders, and sexual deviation, at a level equivalent to the knowledge acquired by the average student successfully completing the course in abnormal psychology at Central State College.

2. A similar approach could be used if you are required to describe how your learning is equivalent in content and level of attainment to courses in a catalog. In such a case, you should write a sentence that is similar to the course descriptions found in that catalog. It may be helpful for you to think about the way you should write a course description if you were to set up a course designed to teach others what you have learned on your own.

3. If you are required to relate your learning to the college's graduation requirements or to a list of competence categories, you should construct a simple sentence that identifies which of the specific requirements or categories has been satisfied by your learning.

4. If you do not need to meet requirements similar to the ones in 1, 2, or 3 above, and your college has established criteria for awarding credit or recognition similar to those found on page 2 of this *Guide*, the sentences you write should clearly show that your learning meets these criteria.

5. If you are free to describe your learning as you wish, the sentences you develop might indicate that your learning meets the criteria on page 7. If so, your sentences might look like the ones in Appendix B. You also might find the diagram or the guidelines in Appendix C helpful.

Whichever method you use, your list of sentences or statements should cover all of the prior experiential learning for which you are seeking credit or recognition. You should number each statement for later reference. Once you have made the list of statements, you will want to check your opinion of yourself with other people who know you well and/or are experts in the fields in which you claim to have learning. You will want to see if they agree that you know and can do and can demonstrate the values you have claimed, and you will want them to check your list of statements against your list of significant life experiences to be sure that you have not left out any important learning from your prior experiences. The individuals with whom you discuss your list of statements should be people in whom you have confidence and from whom you are reasonably certain that you can learn something. Take time to explain to them the reason for your visit, and take careful notes on your discussion to use in preparing a second draft of your list of statements.

After you have satisfied yourself that the learning which you have listed meets the criteria set by the college or those cited in the "General Guidelines for Identifying Creditable Learning" (p.7), you are ready to proceed to the next step. In this step, you should return to your list of significant life experiences and for each subject area (i.e., for each statement you have written) write descriptions of all the experiences since graduation from high school that have significantly contributed to your reaching your present level of competence in that subject area. The descriptions should be written in detail and should contain the following information:

1. List the various *experiences* that contributed to your learning: jobs, home activities, volunteer activities, noncredit courses and seminars, travel, recreational activities, reading, and conversations with experts.

2. For each of the experiences listed in item 1 above, give the amount of *time* in which you engaged in each activity.

3. Describe where the experiences took *place*, and if appropriate, under whose sponsorship.

4. For each experience briefly describe the way in which you were personally *involved* in the experience; i.e., describe exactly what you did within each activity.

5. Define your *position* in the experience in relationship to others with whom you worked or were involved.

6. For each experience include the name and title of the person who *supervised* your activities.

7. Indicate the *numbers* of persons who were responsible to you in the course of the experience and their responsibilities.

8. Describe how each experience *contributed* to your learning achievement. You should show that you learned from past experiences and that each experience contributed to your learning in later activities. Also, it is important to show that a diversity of experiences contributed to the learning claimed.

9. Be certain that all of the facts and events that are of significance to you have been included in your descriptions. Also describe the external *situation* or the *context* in which the experience took place so that a person reading your descriptions will understand the circumstances under which you were operating at the time of the experience.

10. In communicating a generalized experience, the use of specific *examples* and *illustrations* will be helpful.

11. Be certain that you have described both how you have learned what you know and, if appropriate, how you have learned to apply what you know.

12. Give titles and authors for any readings that you include in your description.

Returning to Jim's case, he might select personnel supervision as one subject area which he mastered during his years of experience in personnel management. The sentence describing his learning might read:

> *I know the advanced principles and techniques of personnel supervision and can apply these well enough to function as a plant personnel manager in a large corporation.*

His description of the significant life experiences contributing to his acquiring this knowledge and skill might read:

> *Since 1964, I rose from the position of personnel manager to plant personnel manager at the Cityville, Illinois installation of XYZ Electronic Corporation. I am in charge of personnel screening and recommendations for a unit employing 1,200 people. I directly supervise a professional and clerical staff of seven persons. The personnel office maintains the usual personnel records and provides back-up services to plant managers for activities involving collective bargaining, grievance procedures, and training. The evaluation of plant supervisors is my direct responsibility. I report directly to Mr. Tom Seever, the plant manager. In 1968-71, I was assistant plant personnel manager in the Corporation's installation in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. This experience gave me a chance to compare and contrast operating styles of supervision in our two countries and gave me greater insight into our own practices. In Brazil, I assisted the plant personnel manager, Mr. Jose Diaz, by directly managing the plant's program of gathering data on the job effectiveness of each of 720 employees. Supplementing these experiences, I served as a board member of the First Methodist Church of Cityville from 1965-67. This allowed me to compare and contrast supervision procedures in a voluntary organization with those of a private, for-profit organization. Again, this gave me insight into effective supervision in the latter setting. During the past 11 years, I have subscribed to and read thoroughly the following journals: Personnel Management, Industrial Psychology, and Applied Psychology. I have had published the following article in Personnel Management: "Developing a Supervisory Manual for First Line Plant Supervisors" (June, 1972). I have recently read the following books: Supervision of Production Line Workers by Joseph L. Palisades, Middle Management by Sammuel J. Smith, and Office Manager by Warren G. Smith. These readings have helped me*

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to draw together my ideas on morale, communication, job analysis, evaluation, discipline, work scheduling, establishing rapport, and gaining cooperation.

When you have completed the statements which identify your learning and the descriptions of the ways in which you acquired your learning, you will have developed the central core of your portfolio. In the remaining chapters, we will be discussing the additional information that you should consider including in your portfolio.

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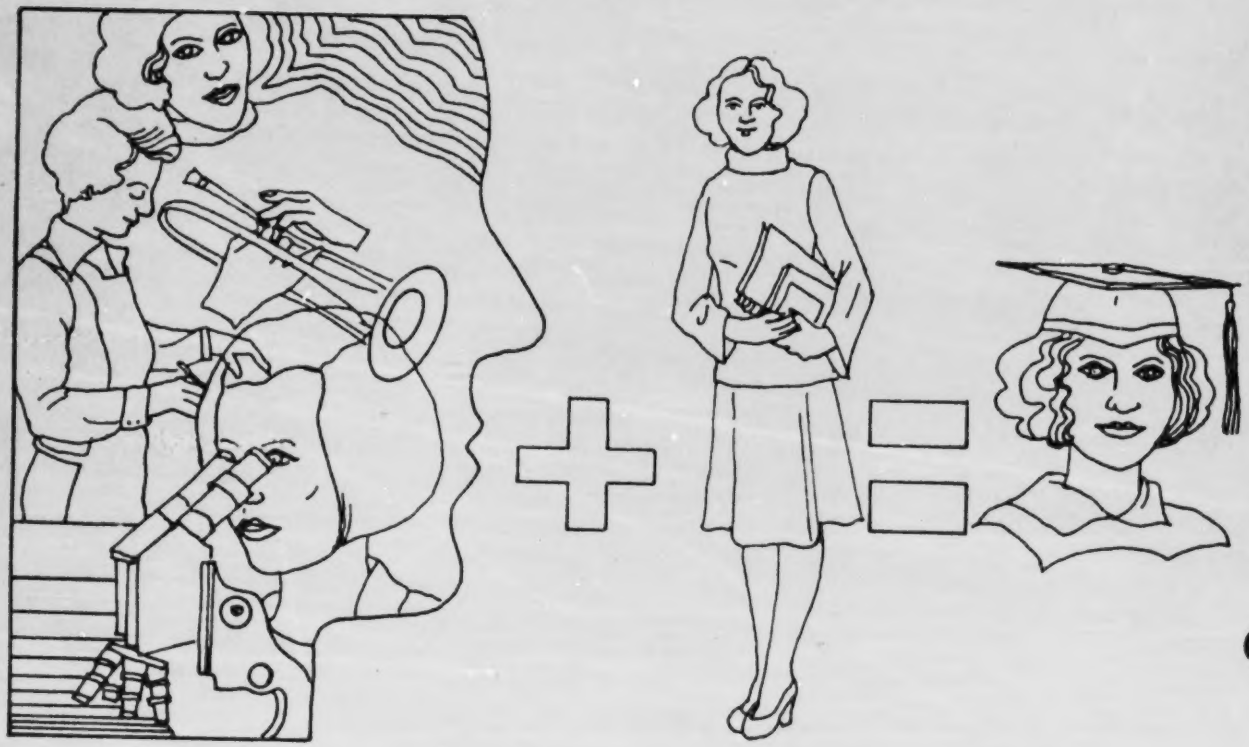
III How To Relate What You Have Learned To What You Want To Learn



Now that you have adequately described your prior experiential learning and how you acquired it, you may want to relate this to your proposed degree program. This could be an important step if your college will not award credit or recognition for prior experiential learning that does not contribute or relate directly to your proposed degree program at that college. Even if your college does not require you to demonstrate such a relationship, this step can assist you in planning your educational goals.

The elements in your proposed degree program will probably be determined by a combination of the following:

1. the educational goals which you have set for yourself because of what you hope to achieve in life;

2. the graduation requirements of the college; and/or

3. the expectations that employers as well as licensing and accrediting agencies may have for persons entering a vocational field in which you have an interest.

If you are interested in pursuing a degree at a particular college, then you will, of course, want to learn those things that are required for a degree by the college. These requirements may be expressed in terms of specific courses, or suggested subject areas, or competences to be achieved. Some colleges will merely require that you demonstrate competence in a number of areas. Other colleges will want to be satisfied that the total program (prior learning plus new learning) that you present to justify the awarding of your degree indicates that you are comparable, in terms of level of achievement, to the other graduates of the college. You will need to understand the degree of freedom that you will have in designing your own program. This you can learn from the college literature and advisors on the staff of the college.

Although the graduation requirements of a college are of importance to you, you will also want to give considerable attention to your own educational goals. Your educational goals will undoubtedly be generated from your thinking about your life goals, and should, therefore, be appropriate in the achievement of your life goals.

Life Goals

Let us consider your *life goals*. What is it you hope to achieve in your life? Do you want to

(Check the goals that are important to you and make notes to yourself.)

- Become more competent in your present career? _____
- Prepare for a new vocation? _____
- Improve your competence in being able to instruct, persuade, and/or understand other people? _____
- Improve your problem-solving capabilities? _____
- Become a more effective citizen? _____
- Improve your skills in child-rearing, homemaking, or being a marriage partner? _____
- Improve or develop competence in a recreational activity? _____
- Simply explore some subject areas you have always wanted to know more about? _____
- Be admitted to a graduate or professional school? _____
- Make social and professional contacts? _____
- Seek solutions to emotional and/or mental problems? _____
- Fulfill a long-time desire to obtain a degree? _____
- Attain greater personal enrichment and development? _____

- Break out of old patterns? _____
- Escape boredom and grinding menial responsibilities? _____
- Reconsider options in life styles and perhaps reconstruct your life? _____
- Attempt to regain significant participation in one or more facets of your life? _____
- Exercise more power in determining your own destiny? _____
- Drop-out for a while and renew yourself and your perspective? _____
- Prepare for retirement years? _____
- Help others achieve their goals? _____
- Learn to use community resources to educate yourself? _____
- Study some social issues in greater depth? _____
- Learn more about your physical environment? _____
- Gain a greater appreciation of the arts? _____
- Use your college studies as a way to set your life goals? _____
- All of these questions relate to what we call "Life goals."

Now you need to put your ideas on paper and make them a part of your portfolio in order to communicate your thoughts to the appropriate college officials. Write down at least three life goals that are important to you at this time. In just a sentence or two, describe the general aims or purposes that you have set for yourself for the next 10 or 15 years.

Educational Goals

Once you have written these tentative descriptions of your life goals, you should then think about the appropriate *educational goals* (e.g., learn the principles and techniques of accounting) to take you from where you are now toward the fulfillment of these life goals. To do this, it may be helpful for you to return to your list of significant life experiences and project into the future. Also, take another look at your list of statements of prior experiential learning and the college credits or recognition that you already possess. Begin to formulate in your own mind the new learning you will need to acquire in order to achieve your life goals. In thinking of the learning you hope to acquire, it will probably be advisable for you to consult with college counselors. You will probably want to turn to those persons with whom you talked when you developed your list of statements of prior experiential learning, and you will probably want to interview experts in the fields related to your life goals. For example, if you wish to become a high school counselor, you should talk with persons who are now counselors as well as with the authorities who certify counselors in the state in which you hope to reside. You will need to learn as much as possible about the learning that will be required in order for you to fulfill your life goals. Your consultation should also include, if appropriate, the admissions officers of graduate or professional schools.

Once you have been able to formulate your educational goals, you should attempt to describe them in written form in terms of the knowledge, skills, and values that you have identified as significant. In doing this, you should review the procedure by which you developed statements about the learning that you currently possess. In addition to identifying the educational goals that you and your consultants think are important, you need to add to your list the goals that the college deems important and has either required of its graduates or suggested that they consider.

When you have identified all of the educational goals appropriate to the degree you are seeking, you will then be able to eliminate from this list the learning that you already possess, *subject to the limitations or policy restrictions placed upon you by your college.* Such limitations may include the following:

- The restrictions the college may place on the amount of credit or recognition that anyone may receive for prior experiential learning.
- The amount of such credit or recognition that may be applied toward a certain degree.
- The amount of credit or recognition that must be earned in residence at the college.
- The restrictions the college may place on the amount of credit or recognition that anyone may transfer from another college.
- The amount of transfer credit or recognition that may be applied toward a degree.

Unless yours is a highly unusual case, you will need to think about what new learning you will need to acquire to earn your degree.

If your college thinks in terms of the courses a student has accumulated in order to justify the awarding of a degree, you will now need to select the courses you will need in order to meet your educational goals. If your college thinks in terms of competence a student has acquired in order to justify awarding of a degree, you will need to select competences you still need or desire to acquire.

If you are in a college setting that allows considerable freedom in designing your educational program or "contracting" for your degree, you may find that writing statements of learning you need to acquire will be facilitated by using the criteria (p. 7) and the learning categories (p.32) listed earlier in this *Guide*. In this situation you will also need to describe how you plan to acquire this new learning. In what learning activities will you participate? To illustrate this approach to relating prior experiential learning to future learning goals, let us continue to develop Jim's case.

Since Jim plans to pursue a liberal arts degree, his college will probably recommend or require an area of concentration and breadth to be demonstrated by a distribution of learning over a number of areas. It would seem reasonable to anticipate that most of the new learning Jim will need to acquire will be to increase his breadth of learning, since he appears to have considerable competence in his vocational area and in communication. To round out his knowledge and skills and further clarify his values, he will probably want to acquire new learning in natural science, fine arts, values clarification, and in creative and recreational areas. Particularly, he might want to build on his cross-cultural and architectural bases. He should consider further explorations of different life styles to expand his understanding of adjustment to life traumas. If he wishes to continue to advance in his profession or with his company, he might consider studies in management fields other than personnel management, e.g., accounting, marketing, and production.

IV How To Document The Experience By Which You Learned

Now that you have identified the prior experiential learning for which you are seeking credit or recognition and have related that learning to what you want to learn, it is appropriate to gather and organize the documentation to verify that you have indeed had the experience(s) which you claim.

Please note that we are returning to a consideration of the experiences you described as we suggested in Chapter II. In this chapter, we are suggesting ways for you to document the experiences or learning activities, *not* the learning outcomes or competences. In chapters V and VI, we will return to the ways in which you may have your learning measured and evaluated for the purposes of requesting credit or recognition.

It is important for you to understand that some colleges do not require that you provide evidence of the measurement and evaluation of your competences, but rather that you simply document that you did, in fact, have the learning experiences you claim. Other colleges will require that you document the learning experiences you claim *and* provide information about the measurement and evaluation of what you say you have learned from these experiences. Still others require *only* reports on the measurement and evaluation of what you know and can do. *Therefore, the importance of the suggestions in this chapter depends on the policies of the college in which you are enrolled.*

Forms of Documentation

As you begin to develop a plan for obtaining and presenting the documentation you wish to include in your portfolio, the first form of documentation that will probably occur to you will be a letter from someone who can verify that you had the experience which you claim. *Letters of verification* are the most common form of documentation appearing in a portfolio. However, several *other forms of documentation* that you might want to consider are listed below.

- Certificates
- Commendations
- Newspaper Articles
- Job Descriptions
- Course Outlines or Syllabi
- Examination Reports
- Bills of Sale
- Military Records
- Programs of Performances
- Mementos
- Work Samples
- Exhibits
- Writing Samples
- Awards
- Honors
- Artistic Works and Accomplishments
  - Photographs
  - Art Work
  - Speeches
  - Publications
  - Designs
  - Other
- Audiovisual Presentations
  - Audiotapes
  - Slides
  - Videotapes
  - Recordings
  - Other
- Licenses
  - Pilot
  - Broker
  - Real Estate
  - Cosmetology
  - Daycare
  - Other

In providing documentation, the objective is to furnish verification that you actually did what you say you did and is not to furnish an evaluation of the learning[3] which you think you gained from the experience.

[3] As we shall see in Chapter V, however, a single document may contain sufficient information to both verify experience *and* report an evaluation of learning. This would be true if the information meets *both* the criteria stated on pp. 50-54 and the criteria on pp. 59-62.

Standards of Documentation

Usually, the college to which you are applying for credit or recognition for prior experiential learning will provide you with guidelines as to what constitutes suitable, acceptable, or adequate documentation for inclusion in your portfolio. Generally, the *documentation should meet the following standards.*

1. If someone is furnishing a *written statement* to verify your experience, the following guidelines should be observed:

   a. The person preparing the statement should have directly observed you during the experience and not simply know about your experience second- or thirdhand.

      EXAMPLE. If Jim wishes to verify the experience which he has had as a personnel manager, this should be done by someone at the company where he works who has observed him during his 11 years in personnel administration, not by someone who has read his articles or who knows only from secondhand information that Jim has been involved in personnel administration.

   b. One person may verify more than one of your experiences. However, any written statement provided by that person should comment directly, separately, and clearly on each experience.

      EXAMPLE. One person who has worked closely with Ted may be able to verify that he has been a member of all the organizations he claims, but such a person, in writing a letter of verification, should refer specifically to each of the organizations and to the quality and quantity of the experience which Ted was observed to have had.

c. A statement of verification should be reasonably accurate and complete. In a general way, the statement should cover all the points in the descriptions which you wrote in response to the instructions on pages 36-37.

EXAMPLE: If a person is verifying Laura's experience of starting her own ceramic business, it would be good if the letter of verification included all the significant points, including the fact that Laura's business began as a hobby, that the business has grown and currently employs 25 part-time workers, and that Laura does, in fact, run the business.

d. The writer of a verification statement should identify the activities that he or she has observed directly.

EXAMPLE. If someone were to furnish a letter of verification to provide information about Sharon's experience in clothing design, the person writing the letter should indicate that he or she observed Sharon actually constructing clothing.

e. The person writing the letter of verification should identify his or her relationship to you (supervisor, peer, subordinate, etc.) and his or her qualifications for commenting on your experience.

EXAMPLE. Bill is claiming to have transacted business in French and German. The person who is attempting to verify this experience should also be qualified to speak French and German.

f. The letter should be written on the official letterhead stationery of the company or organization with which the author is associated, or on forms provided by the college.

g. You should make it clear to the author that the letter to be written is one of *verification* not recommendation.

2. If the documentation which you plan to furnish is a *product of your experience*, such as a work sample or a piece of art, the following guidelines may prove helpful in deciding how to make your presentation:

   a. You should be ready to furnish proof that you did, in fact, produce the product which you are presenting. This may involve a supplemental letter of verification from someone who observed you in the process of producing the product.

   b. Some products may be too large, cumbersome, or valuable to include in a portfolio. In such cases, it may be necessary to provide a photograph of the product and a statement of your willingness to bring the product to a college offical or to take the college official to the product that you are using as documentation of your experience.

      EXAMPLE. Laura could not include a piece of ceramic work in her portfolio to document her experience in ceramics, but she could provide either a photograph or could indicate that she would be willing to provide several of her pieces of ceramic art if a college official wished to see them.

   c. You should provide several examples of the products of a particular experience to prove to the appropriate college officials that you did have the experience you claim.

      EXAMPLE. If Ted were to provide samples of his photography work, he would need to provide more than one or two pictures in order to demonstrate that he had the amount of experience in photography which he is claiming.

3. *It is possible to furnish too much documentation.* Remember that the college is probably more interested in the section of your portfolio in which you demonstrate that you understand what you gained from your experiences, rather than an appendix that furnishes a "mountain" of documentation. It is better for you to analyze your experiences and collect sufficient documentation to furnish verification that you have, in fact, participated in the experiences which you have described in your portfolio.

   EXAMPLE. Bill could undoubtedly provide many mementos and forms of documentation resulting from his extensive travels in Europe. However, the college will be more interested in his demonstrating an understanding of the significance of his experiences rather than reading through and looking at the many items which he may have collected and brought back with him from Europe.

4. The documentation should verify both the *quality and quantity* of experience which you have had.

   EXAMPLE. In verifying her experience as a secretary, June will want to provide documentation not only for the number of years she was a secretary and a supervisor but also for the scope of her responsibilities and the number of persons whom she supervised.

5. Some colleges will require that letters of verification be *notarized.*

6. Products included in your portfolio should be *clearly labeled* and should be *signed* and *dated* by you.

7. Documentation probably will be considered to be *public information.* In other words, you should know that a number of individuals will look at the documentation that you furnish or that is furnished in your behalf. Persons who provide letters of verification should also be informed of this fact.

8. Even if you attempt to trim down the amount of documentation, some individual specimens may be quite long. You should *underline those parts of the document relevant to the claimed experience* with a colored pen.

To assist you in thinking about the documentation that you might want to include in your portfolio, return to your list of significant life experiences (pp. 24-28) and for each experience, list on Worksheet A, on the following page, the appropriate documents you will want to collect and have on hand to include in your portfolio or to use as a supplement to your portfolio.

Worksheet A
Documentation of Experiences

(Use the same numbers for the experiences that you used in your list of significant experiences.)

Documentation for experience no. 1: _____

_____

_____

Documentation for experience no. 2: _____

_____

_____

Documentation for experience no. 3: _____

_____

_____

Documentation for experience no. 4: _____

_____

_____

Documentation for experience no. 5: _____

_____

_____

Documentation for experience no. 6: _____

_____

_____

(If you need more space, use the back of this sheet.)

V How To Measure How Much and How Well You Have Learned

As we indicated in Chapter IV, it is important for you to know the distinction among the terms *documentation*, *measurement*, and *evaluation*.

Documentation is the process by which you provide written materials or products that establish the fact that you participated in certain learning experiences. This was discussed in Chapter IV.

Measurement is the process by which someone determines how much and how well you learned as a result of your learning experiences. We will discuss the techniques available to accomplish measurement in this chapter.

Evaluation is the process of relating the measurement of learning to standards in order to determine how much credit or recognition should be awarded to you for learning. We will discuss this in Chapter VI.

Not all colleges will require you to submit precise measurements of your prior experiential learning, but the better you are able to do this, the more likely you are to achieve the benefits of the assessment process. As you will recall, these benefits, as discussed in the Note to the Reader in the opening section of the *Guide*, are:

1. Maximizing the credit or recognition you will receive for your prior experiential learning.

2. Gaining a realistic appraisal of your present levels of competence.

3. Possessing accurate information for planning future learning.

4. Acquiring an understanding of how to measure learning (knowledge, skills, and values).

Therefore, even though your college does not require you to present information about the precise level of achievement for your learning, it is to your advantage to collect this information for your own use.

Guidelines for Adequate Measurement

As with documentation of experience, there are some generally acceptable *guidelines* as to what constitutes *adequate measurement* of learning. In determining what techniques are appropriate for measuring learning in a specific subject area, your decisions should be guided by these standards. You will probably find that college officials are usually guided by these same standards in judging whether or not the measurement of your learning was adequate and appropriate. Later in this section we will discuss some specific techniques commonly used to measure prior experiential learning. The following guidelines will assist you in making informed selections of these techniques.

1. It is important to clarify with the officials of your college whether or not you may receive credit or recognition for any learning you once possessed *or* only learning that you can currently demonstrate. If the former is the case, the measurement of your learning may have taken place long ago, and you will be expected to obtain only a report of it. If the latter policy is in effect at your college, the measurement should have taken place fairly recently.

   EXAMPLE. It may have been some time since June practiced certain secretarial skills. If so, an evaluation of those skills that occurred many years ago may no longer be an adequate measurement. She may be required to have someone evaluate her secretarial skills as they currently exist.

2. The techniques or combination of techniques should measure the learning precisely as you have stated it in response to instructions on pages 29-35.

   EXAMPLE. If Bill is claiming that he can communicate in French, his oral as well as written knowledge and skill should be measured. It would not be adequate to infer from a measurement of his oral communication that he can also communicate adequately in written form in that language.

3. You should be able to convince an expert in the subject area of your learning that the measurement technique(s) used was (were) reliable. Some ways to do this include (a) showing an expert more than one of your products, (b) letting the expert see you perform in more than one situation, or (c) using more than one expert to evaluate you.

EXAMPLE. If Ted were to claim competence in public speaking, the measurement of this competence should not be based upon one person's evaluation of one of Ted's speeches. Rather, reliability would be achieved by having two or three persons evaluate two or three of his speeches. If these evaluations show some consistency, we could have confidence that the next evaluation that was made of Ted's public speaking ability would probably be nearly the same as the earlier evaluations.

4. The most precise, comprehensive, and stable measurement technique for one of your competences may be too expensive, complex, or time-consuming to be a reasonable choice. If this is the case, you are justified in selecting one that is less valid or reliable but that would convince an expert in the subject area of your learning that you possess the claimed learning.

EXAMPLE. Laura may claim to be competent in business management. The most valid and reliable technique for evaluating her knowledge, skills, and attitudes would be to have one or more experts in business management come to her place of business and conduct an evaluation of her competence. This assessment technique, however, would be very expensive and time-consuming. An acceptable alternative would be to have Laura's understanding of business management evaluated by means of some type of simulation exercise.

5. The number of measurements that you have made, number of products you present, and number of measurement techniques you use should be only as many as are needed to persuade an expert in the subject area of your learning that you probably possess the knowledge, skills, or attitudes you claim. It is not necessary to prove "beyond the shadow of a doubt" that you possess the learning.

EXAMPLE. It is not necessary, in order to provide an adequate measurement of Jim's professional writing ability, to have a dozen writing samples evaluated by a dozen experts in order to establish his present level of competence in that area. Two or three samples evaluated by two or three experts should be sufficient. Furthermore, it is not necessary for him to have his writing observed as he is doing it and to take a written examination on the various principles of professional writing.

6. In 2, 4, and 5 above, we have referred to "an expert in the subject area of your learning." Generally, an expert is one who is likely to be objective about you and possess at least one of the following characteristics: (a) adequate academic preparation in the subject area; (b) adequate teaching experience in the subject area; (c) adequate experience supervising workers in the subject area; (d) adequate publications in the subject area; (e) reception of an appropriate award or recognition in the subject area; (f) demonstration of a high level of achievement in the subject area; (g) appropriate unique qualifications that would make him/her one of the few persons available to do an assessment in the subject area. Although information about your learning may be furnished by peers or subordinates, a final judgment about the information will need to be made by an expert. The college may provide experts from the college staff and/or may allow you to use experts not associated with the college. You need to know your college's policy concerning who is qualified to measure your learning.

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EXAMPLE. Neither Sharon's husband nor her children are qualified to judge her competence in child development. It is highly unlikely that Sharon's friends or neighbors would qualify as experts in child development, even though they have closely observed her application of her knowledge in child development. The college might require that Sharon's competence be measured by a member of the faculty who is a specialist in child development. However, it is possible that Sharon could have her knowledge, skills, and attitudes measured by a child psychologist who is in private practice.

7. A single technique may be used to measure learning in more than one subject area, provided that the technique meets the requirements of the guidelines set forth above.

EXAMPLE. Bill's knowledge of accounting and inventory control might be measured through a single assessment exercise.

Measurement Techniques

Using the above guidelines, you are ready to examine the various techniques commonly used to measure prior experiential learning. Other equally appropriate techniques may come to your mind, and the college may be able to make other suggestions to you. Some colleges have policies regarding the measurement techniques that are considered the most appropriate for measuring certain kinds of learning. For example, many colleges require that the measurement of learning in traditional subject areas be conducted by means of a College-Level Examination Program (CLEP) examination in cases in which such examinations are available.

As we discuss the various MEASUREMENT TECHNIQUES listed in the remainder of this chapter, we will provide illustrative examples to assist you in understanding the techniques. You should not, however conclude that we are suggesting that learning in a particular subject area could be measured appropriately only by a particular technique nor should you conclude that we are suggesting that a given technique could measure only learning in a particular subject area. The examples are intended only as illustrations. The variety of possible combinations in applying appropriate measurement techniques to specific subject areas is great.

Situational Observation

This technique is commonly used to measure prior experiential learning. By observing your behavior in a natural setting and by using a rating scale, an expert can record what it is you know and can do and what attitudes you demonstrate. The observer expert can then evaluate what you do by one or more of the following three methods:

1. You may be compared with other persons who do the same things that you do.

2. The rating scale used by the expert may require that he estimate your level of performance on a continuum (e.g., from unsatisfactory to excellent).

3. The rating scale used by the observer may be only a checklist of the appropriate kinds of behavior that you should exhibit in the situation under observation.

If is is inconvienient or inappropriate to have an observer present when you are doing what you claim competence to do, you may want to consider having your performance audiotaped or videotaped. This would permit one or more experts to evaluate your performance.

Usefulness. Situational observation is particularly appropriate for measuring the application of knowledge. It is used in a wide variety of settings, including employment and volunteer activities.

Illustration. In order to measure Ted's salesmanship competence, two of his supervisors accompany him at various times when he is working with a potential customer. At the conclusion of each field visit, the supervisor completes a rating form that is used to evaluate Ted's skills as a salesman.

Considerations. There are a number of things that should be considered in structuring a situational observation measurement. The information furnished by the expert should be based upon first-hand observations. The expert doing the evaluation should specify which activities were actually observed. In addition to the use of rating forms, some indication of the level of your competence may also be provided to the college by indicating any awards, citations, or other formal recognitions that you may have received. Because of the possible bias on the part of human observers, it is a good idea to have two or three observers rate and report on your level of performance.

Product Assessment

Product assessment, like situational observation, usually involves the use of rating scales or forms. In this case, the rating is a measurement of a product that a person has produced rather than an observation of a person's performance. Such products in the assessment of prior experiential learning commonly include reports, forms, musical compositions, drawings, paintings, photographs and other projects and work samples.

Usefulness. You would probably choose product assessment as a measurement technique in one of the following situations:

1. An evaluation of a product itself by a panel of experts would be better proof of your level of learning than evaluation of the process by which you produced a product.

2. The process by which you produce a product cannot be observed by others (e.g., the process by which a piece of creative writing was produced).

Illustration. Laura's competence in prose writing could be measured by having her submit samples of her work to two or three experts in prose writing. The experts could rate the writing samples on a scale, the ratings could be pooled, and a summary of the ratings could be provided so that Laura's competence could be judged.

Considerations. You should be able to verify that the products were, in fact, produced by you. Don't attempt to obtain a measurement on everything you ever produced. A representative sample of examples will be adequate. Products presented for measurement should be labeled and dated. Again, any award citations or other official forms of recognition would be acceptable supplements to a product assessment procedure. If it seems appropriate for you to explain how you made the product, you might request an interview with the judges.

Oral Interviews

An oral interview is a face-to-face situation in which one person, the interviewer, asks you questions designed to obtain answers that will lead to an evaluation of your knowledge, skills, or values. Usually the interviewer will have a list of questions relating directly to the learning to be measured. The interviewer will ask you these questions during the interview and will make notes concerning your answers. Later, he or she will make a judgment as to your level of competence. To increase reliability, simultaneous interviews by more than one interviewer may be advisable.

Usefulness. The oral interview could be an especially good measurement technique in situations in which:

1. You are the best source of information about your learning;
2. You communicate more effectively orally than in writing;
3. It is used to supplement other measurement techniques to insure that all facets of your learning are being measured;
4. The ability to express complex concepts is being measured;
5. The ability to compare and contrast ideas is being measured;
6. Creative problem-solving ability is being measured;
7. Oral translation from one language to another is being measured.

Illustration. If Ted wished to obtain a measurement of his competence in camping, he might select the oral interview as a measurement technique. One or more experts in camping could question him concerning where he went, the type of equipment he used, how he set up camp, and how he managed to survive under various situations. The interviewer could ask a sufficient number of questions until he, the interviewer, was satisfied that he had obtained the appropriate amount of information. Also, Ted would be free to volunteer information that would substantiate his level of competence in camping. The interviewer would report Ted's responses and compare this information with that provided by Ted's companions on his camping trips. The interviewer could then arrive at an overall rating of Ted's camping knowledge and skills and demonstration of appropriate attitudes.

Considerations. If you use the oral interview as a technique for measuring learning, you should:

1. Assist the interviewer in constructing a list of questions to be asked of you during the interview. Prior to the oral interview, you might send a written list of questions that you think would be appropriate for the interview. The interviewer will undoubtedly add other questions.

2. Have an understanding with the interviewer that you are free to volunteer information during the oral interview.

3. Be sure that the interviewer knows precisely what learning is to be measured, and try to reach some agreement, in advance, as to criteria by which you will be judged.

4. Request that the interview be taped. This will allow you to have the interview evaluated by more than one person.

5. If having the interview taped is not possible or appropriate, consider being interviewed by more than one interviewer.

Objective Written Examinations

These examinations consist of a series of questions; for each question there are several options as answers. You are asked to choose which option you consider to be the correct answer for each question. Usually, an answer sheet is provided for marking your choice. There are other forms of objective written tests, but this is a description of the form which is by far the most common.

Usefulness. The objective written examination is most appropriate for measuring the possession of a set body of subject matter information. The College-Level Examination Program (CLEP) provides a number of examinations that are commonly used to measure prior experiential learning closely related to traditional subject-matter areas at the college-level.[4] Another common form of objective written examination appropriate for measuring college-level learning is represented by the licensing examinations used by various state boards and professional associations (for example, in such areas as nursing, real estate sales, airplane piloting, certified public accounting, law, etc.). A complete listing of published written examinations may be found in the *Mental Measurements Yearbook*[5] by Buros. Nearly every college has an individual or office responsible for administering published objective written examinations. Also, many colleges use the final examinations in existing courses to measure learning in many subject areas. A competent examiner will administer the test to you, score it or have it scored, and issue a written score report for your use.

Illustration. June's knowledge in the subject area of psychology could be measured by an objective written examination. Her college probably has one or more courses in this subject area. The final examination of a course or a public examination could be used to measure her knowledge in this area.

Considerations. If you plan to select an objective written examination as a measurement technique, you should be certain that the examination covers the subject area which you want to be measured. You should also be reasonably certain that the examination does not cover more than you intend to have measured. In other words, the questions on the examinations should be directly related to the knowledge which you wish to have measured. The questions should not cover material that you have not learned. There should be questions which pertain to the entire subject area that you want to measure.

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[4] For further information on CLEP, write to College-Level Examination Program, Box 1824, Princeton, N.J. 08540.

[5] The libraries of most colleges and universities have copies of the *Yearbook*.

Essay Examinations

Essay tests usually contain a series of questions or assignments. You are expected to organize and write answers to these questions or assignments. An expert then reads your answers. Usually the expert will not classify your answers as right or wrong but will rate your answers according to the degree of quality or merit that can be recognized. Your answer on an essay examination may be used to measure either the amount of your knowledge in a subject area or your ability to use that knowledge.

Usefulness. Essay examinations are particularly appropriate in measuring the following:

1. The ability to express complex concepts.
2. The ability to compare and contrast ideas.
3. Translating from one language to another in written form.
4. Creative problem-solving ability.

Essay examinations are also useful if you communicate more effectively in writing than orally or if you are the best source of information on the topic of the essay.

Illustration. Bill's competence in small business management might be measured by presenting him with a series of problems commonly faced by the managers of small businesses and by asking him to write his solutions to those problems in an essay. His answers would be evaluated by one or more experts in the area of small business management according to the amount of knowledge he seemed to possess about small business management, as well as the amount of imagination and insight he was able to demonstrate on the examination.

Considerations. If you select an essay examination as a measurement technique, you should, as in the case of the oral interview, attempt to provide some suggestions about the questions that will be asked. If the essay examination under consideration for you is a published one, you should be certain, as in the case of the objective written examination, that it contains questions that relate directly to the learning that you want measured. You should have agreement with the person who will be evaluating the essay examination answers about the standards or criteria that will be employed in evaluating your answers. Since persons evaluating the answers to essay examinations do not always agree about the level of learning indicated by those answers, you should request that more than one evaluator judge your answers. The ratings of the evaluators should then be pooled into a composite rating of the learning that is being measured.

Performance Tests

In a performance test you are required to perform specific tasks in a situation designed and set up by an examiner. Examples include typing and shorthand tests, listening tests in music, conversational tests in foreign language, electronic equipment operation and "trouble-shooting" tests, airplane operation tests, and the various skill tests designed for sports and physical fitness.

Usefulness. Performance tests are especially appropriate if you wish to measure a skill or what you are able to do with knowledge. Performance tests should be used when it is difficult or expensive for you to have someone measure you skill in a natural setting. It may be just as appropriate and considerably less expensive and time-consuming to have someone contrive a situation designed specifically to measure your ability. For example, it would seem to be more efficient to have you appear at a specific time and place to diagnose a particular problem on a piece of electronic equipment than to wait until that particular problem arose in a piece of equipment in your work situation in order for the examiner to observe your performance.

Illustration. Jim's skill in conversational Spanish and Portuguese could be measured by a performance test. A person fluent in the two languages could engage Jim in a conversation and observe him conversing with other persons proficient in the two languages. The expert in the two languages could then evaluate Jim's ability to communicate in the two languages on nontechnical topics.

Considerations. If a performance test appears to be the most appropriate measurement technique to be used to measure one of your skills, you should be certain that the test represents what actually happens in your performance in a natural situation; that is, the test should be a representative sample of your actual performance on the job. Your performance should be observed and judged by more than one expert in order to obtain good reliability. The equipment that you will use during the performance test should be familiar to you. If the presence of the expert observing your performance is likely to upset you or other people involved in the performance test, you should request that either a videotape be made of your performance or that the expert making the observations be as unobtrusive as possible. You should be informed in advance about the criteria by which your performance will be judged and the relative weight to be given to each criterion.

Simulations

In terms of complexity and convenience, simulations lie somewhere between performance tests and situational observation. A simulated situational test is usually less complex and more convenient than the real situation, but is more complex and somewhat less convenient than a performance test. Simulations may be of actual situations or may be related to conceived or projected situations. In addition, simulations may frequently be used to measure very complex competences or several competences at a single time. Examples include simulated trainers, simulated business exercises, role-playing situations, management games, and military games. A listing and description of existing commercially available simulations is included in *The Guide to Simulations/Games for Education and Training* edited by Robert E. Horn.[6] As with situational observation and performance tests, you would be observed by one or more experts in the course of the simulation performance, and ratings or other written records would be kept of your performance. A judgment concerning your level of performance would be made at a later time.

Usefulness. Simulations are particularly appropriate in the measurement of rather complex abilities such as analytical thinking, goal-setting, risk-taking, interpersonal competence, decision-making, sensitivity to the behavior of others, and planning.

Illustration. Bill's competence in small business management could be measured by a simulation game. He and three other students could participate in a game in which items are bought for resale in a retail outlet. Each person in the game decides what items are to bought and how many and at what prices they are to be offered. They are expected to maximize profits as various factors in the economy change. Bill, along with the other players, could be rated by members of the business faculty as to planning and organizing skills, problem analysis, judgment, initiative, marketing and sales insight, etc.

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[6] Check with the college librarian or those faculty members assigned to assist you in putting together your portfolio to find a copy of the *Guide*.

Considerations. If you are planning to use a simulation as a measurement technique, you should consider the same factors that were discussed in relation to performance tests. In addition, you should be aware of the potential costs involved in obtaining and using simulations.

Following any measurement process, you should obtain for your files and for your portfolio a written statement of the results of the process in the form of a letter, completed form, official certification, or score report.[7] This is true whether or not the process is administered by the college official or by an external evaluator. This will facilitate your verification of the measurement results to any interested party. The person providing the written statement should specify his/her relationship to you (supervisor, peer, subordinate, etc.) as well as his/her qualifications for measuring your learning. If your college does not provide forms or guidelines for evaluators, Appendix D provides sample materials that may be helpful in drafting your own written instructions to your evaluators.

Turn now to your list of statements that identify your prior experiential learning -- the statements you prepared in response to the instructions on pp. 35-37. For each statement, list on Worksheet 8 on the following page, two or more measurement techniques that you might use to provide evidence of your learning. This will aid you in making your final selection of the measurement techniques you actually use.

[7] As we indicated in Chapter IV, such a document may report a measurement *and* provide information verifying your experience. If the document is intended to do both, it should meet both the criteria on pp. 50-54 and the criteria on pp. 59-62.

Worksheet B
Measurement Techniques

(Use the same numbers for the statements that you used in response to instructions on p.35.)

Measurement techniques for statement no. 1: _____

_____

_____

Measurement techniques for statement no. 2: _____

_____

_____

Measurement techniques for statement no. 3: _____

_____

_____

Measurement techniques for statement no. 4: _____

_____

_____

Measurement techniques for statement no. 5: _____

_____

_____

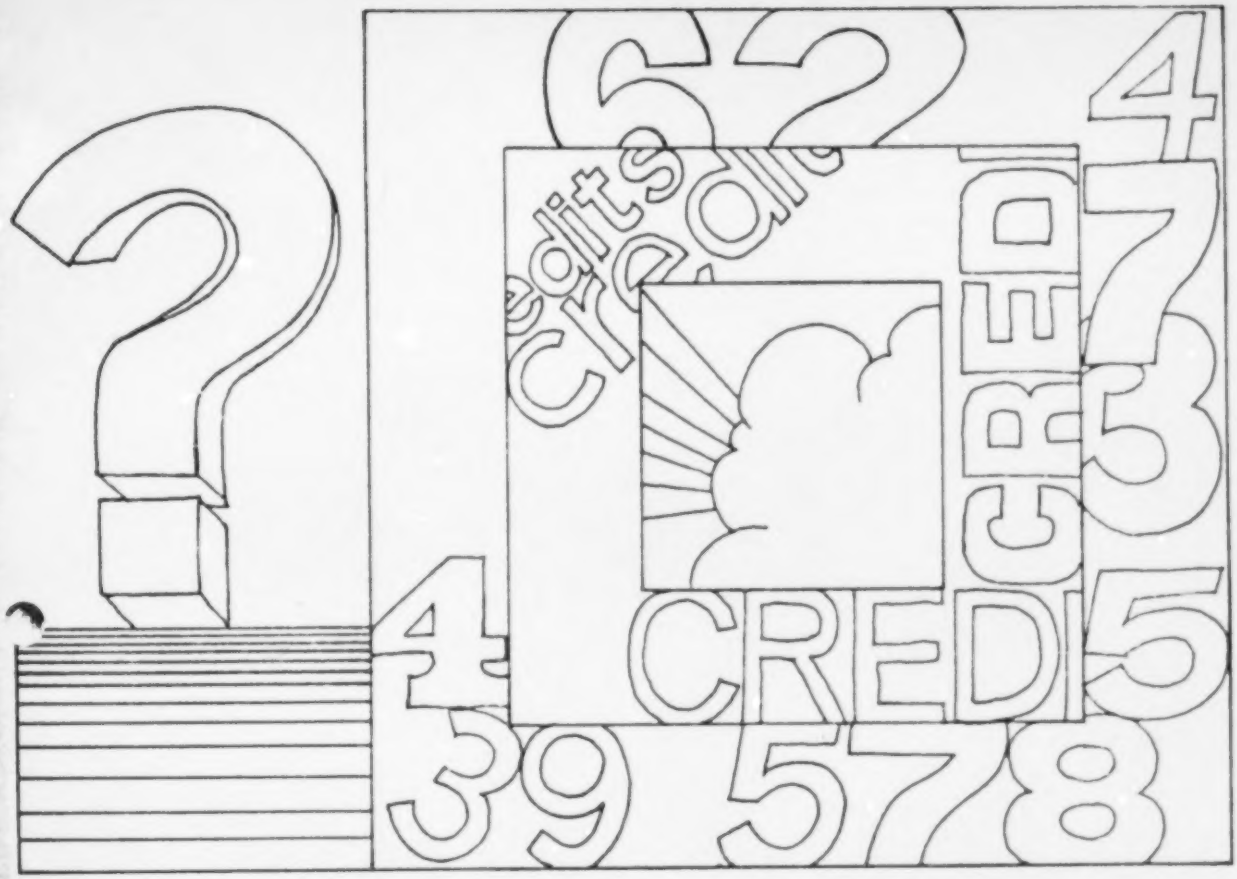
Measurement techniques for statement no. 6: _____

_____

_____

(If you need more space, use the back of this sheet.)

VI How To Request A Specific Amount Of Credit Or Recognition For What You Have Learned



Now that you have identified learning that you believe merits college credit or recognition, documented your learning experiences, and had experts measure your learning, you should find some way to relate these measurements to acceptable standards in order to determine how much credit or recognition you might reasonably request of a college for your prior experiential learning. As we indicated earlier, this latter process is known as *evaluation*.

The college will, of course, make the final judgment as to how much your prior experiential learning is worth in terms of academic credit or recognition. The college may not expect or require that you make an evaluation of your own or that you specify an exact amount of credit or recognition. It is, however, to your advantage to evaluate your own learning to detrmine what you think it is worth. By making your own evaluation, you are able to:

1. Make recommendations to a college concerning appropriate credit or recognition for your prior experiential learning that may influence the final decision in your favor.

2. Become more specific about what you plan to learn in the future.

3. Better understand the process by which colleges award credit or recognition.

As we indicated in Chapter 1, colleges differ considerably in the way in which they recognize prior experiential learning. Some colleges award credit, others award advanced placement, and still others award recognition by placing a description of your learning or competences on a transcript or by checking your achievements against a list of competences required for graduation. You should know the kind of recognition offered by your college. Colleges also vary considerably in the manner in which they determine how much credit or recognition they will award for your prior experiential learning and the standards they use to determine the value of such learning. You should understand what standards are to be applied to determine the value of your learning.

In determining how many credits or how much recognition you request and in attempting to justify your request, you may find one or more of the following approaches useful. Read through this list and, in consultation with an appropriate staff member of your college, check off those approaches that may be useful to you.

(Check the approaches that will be useful to you.)

1. First of all, check again to see that the learning for which you are requesting credit or recognition meets the general guidelines on page 7, or other general criteria used by your college for identifying creditable learning. _____

2. Read the catalog of your present college. See if the learning for which you want credit is covered by any of the courses listed. If so, adjust your request for credit according to the credit usually awarded for such learning. If you think you have learned part of what is taught in a given course, ask for a proportionate amount of credit; if more, ask for more credit than is awarded to those who complete the course. _____

EXAMPLE. June may relate her level of learning in abnormal psychology to that generally exhibited by persons who have taken a course in abnormal psychology. If those students receive, typically, three quarter hours of credit for basic learning in abnormal psychology by virtue of taking the course, it is likely that June would receive three quarter hours of credit for the knowledge that she possesses in the area of abnormal psychology.

3. Read through the catalogs of postsecondary institutions (community colleges, universities, technical-vocational schools, four-year colleges, etc.)[8] until you find a course(s) that covers your learning. Then, follow the same procedure as in #1 above. Check to determine if your college will consider for credit or recognition learning in subject areas that are taught at other postsecondary institutions, but, perhaps, not included in its curriculum. _____

EXAMPLE. June wants credit or recognition for her ability in fund raising. In such a case, June would find it necessary to find a college that offered a course in fund raising and identify it in her portfolio to justify to the appropriate college official or committee that it is indeed a college-level competence in a legitimate subject area.

4. Even though you can't find a specific course offered at your college (or any other postsecondary institution), you might find that the general subject area of your learning is one in which course work is offered. You might be able to begin your request by showing that courses closely related to your subject area do exist. Sometimes a college will allow credit or recognition under the course title of "independent study" in a subject area. _____

[8] Most public libraries and nearly all high school counseling offices have collections of college and university catalogs.

EXAMPLE. The college to which June applies may not offer a course in fund raising. The college policy may be to allow credit or recognition for learning subject areas covered in the college's curriculum. The policy allows for credit or recognition to be given for learning in subject areas that are generally related to the college curriculum. In such a case, June might receive credit for ability in fund raising if she can identify it with an existing general subject area, e.g., business management.

5. If you have taken course work at your present college or at other colleges or universities, you have some idea of the amount of learning you had to acquire for a given amount of credit or recognition. You might ask yourself the question, "How much time would I have normally spent in academic study to accomplish the learning comparable to the one in question?"

EXAMPLE. Although Sharon has not had course work in home economics, she has had two years of other college work. By asking herself the above question, she can estimate the amount of credit or recognition she should receive for what she has learned in the field of home economics.

6. Is there a published examination in the subject area of your learning? Check the *Mental Measurements Yearbook* by Buros to find out. Even if you don't actually take these examinations, the legitimacy of your request for credit or recognition in a subject area may be established by the fact that a college-level or adult-level examination exists for that subject. For some of these published tests, particularly the College-Level Examination Program (CLEP) tests and the New York Regents External Degrees/College Proficiency Examinations, national recommendations regarding credit have been developed. Also, your college may allow you to take the final examination of any courses it offers, without enrolling in the courses, and thus receive credit or recognition.

EXAMPLE. If Sharon took and achieved a sufficiently high score on the CLEP subject examination in general psychology, she could reasonably ask her college to award the amount of credit recommended by Educational Testing Service for that examination--three semester hours.

7. If you are seeking credit for learning acquired through military training programs, you will find that most colleges and universities accept the recommendations of the American Council on Education (ACE). The ACE has published its recommendations concerning credit for military courses in a book, *Guide to the Evaluation of Educational Experiences in the Armed Services* by Miller and Sullivan.[9]

[9]The admission office of nearly any college or university and many public libraries would have copies of these guides.

EXAMPLE. In checking the Guide, Bill might find that it recommends a total of 15 semester hours credit for the Air Force courses he took in inventory management, procurement, and record keeping. He could base his request on this recommendation.

8. Credit recommendations for some of the formal educational programs sponsored by business, industry, government, and professional associations are found in *A Guide to Educational Programs in Non-Collegiate Organizations*, published by ACE and the University of the State of New York.[10]

EXAMPLE. One of Ted's workshops, a seminar in real estate and mortgage principles is listed in this Guide and carries with it recommendation for four semester hours credit. He could base his request on this recommendation.

9. If your college has defined, in a general way, the learning it expects you to acquire in order to graduate, you could identify specifically how much of this learning you think you have already achieved. The college statement of graduation requirements may be in terms of courses, educational objectives, learning experiences, or competences.

EXAMPLE. The college to which June applies may have a list of competences required for graduation. One of these competences may be civic competence. In such a case, June likely could receive credit or recognition for her competence in fund raising if she can demonstrate that her competence level meets the college's competence requirement in the civic area.

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[10] See footnote 9.

10. If your college allows students to design their own degree programs, your request for credit or recognition may be a part of your total proposal or contract for a degree. In this case you will probably need to show the relevancy of the learning for which you are requesting credit or recognition to your degree program. _____

EXAMPLE. June wishes to prepare for graduate school in psychology. The competences that she now possesses in secretarial science, office supervision, and fund raising may not, in the view of her college, relate directly to her educational goal. The college may determine that although her competences are at a college level, credit or recognition will not be awarded for these competences since they do not directly relate to her educational goals. In such a situation, June would probably receive credit or recognition only for her competence in abnormal psychology.

11. Sometimes, colleges will award large blocks of credit based on a comparison of your level and breadth of learning with that of those who have graduated and are employed in a particular field. This is particularly true of employment fields that require training and/or experience beyond high school for certification, licensing, credentialing, or registry. _____

EXAMPLE. In such a case, Laura might demonstrate that her business management competence is at least equivalent to the business management competence of those persons in the field who have majored in business administration. Since a major in this field normally acquires about 60 quarter hours of credit in strictly business courses, she might request 60 quarter hours of credit in recognition of her learning.

12. Some colleges may wish to consider the nature of the experiences that led to learning. Some consider that there must be evidence of academic study involved, e.g., reading books, attending lectures, and writing papers.

EXAMPLE. See Jim's description of his significant life experiences in Chapter III. In such a case as his, Jim would want to show how much of his experience is "academic" and how this is equivalent to the amount of academic study in a typical course or set of courses offered by the college.

13. Most colleges have formulae by which they relate the amount of credit or recognition to the amount of time a student spends in a learning activity (course, independent study, internship, etc.). Awards of credit or recognition for prior experiential learning may be tied to these formulae. Some colleges have developed formulae that are related to time spent as well as to the complexity and performance-level demands of the learning activity. Check with your college to see if such formulae exist and could appropriately be used as a basis for a credit or recognition request. This approach may be particularly useful in cases in which your learning resulted from noncredit courses, workshops, or in-service training.

EXAMPLE. A commonly used formula for courses and independent study is to equate three hours of study per week (in and out of class) over a quarter or a semester to one hour of credit for that quarter or semester. A one-quarter-hour course assumes, for example, that a student will spend 12 hours in class (1 hour per week x 12 weeks) and 24 hours out-of-class study for a total effort of 36 hours. A one-semester-hour course might assume that a student will spend 18 hours in class (1 hour per week x 18 weeks) and 36 hours in out-of-class study for a total effort of 54 hours.

Using this formula, Ted could reasonably request five quarter hours of credit for the workshops on salesmanship he attended (assuming 60 hours in class + 120 hours out-of-class study = 180 hours of effort : 36 = 5 quarter hours.) He could use the same formula to determine the amount of credit he should request for his independent reading in salesmanship and also the amount he should request for his competence in salesmanship.

Most colleges do not use the same formula for courses and independent study that they use for internships or field experience, however. This, in turn, will probably mean that you should not use the same formula to determine your request for credit or recognition for learning gained through work experience or voluntary activities.

14. Finally, the total amount of credit or recognition you may decide to request may be dependent on whether or not any of the following exist at your college:

    a. Limitation on the amount of credit or recognition you may receive for all of your prior experiential learning. _____

    b. Residency requirements. _____

    c. Specific limits on the amount of credit or recognition you may receive in a single field or subject area. _____

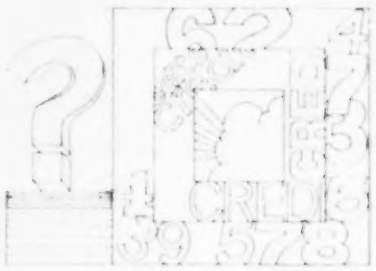
EXAMPLES. Ted has extensive ability and competence in camping. However, the college may determine that only a small amount of credit may be awarded in a recreational area and applied toward a degree. This would limit the amount of credit that Ted could receive for application toward his degree.

In Bill's case, he has had a considerable amount of experience, and his general level of competence might be judged by most professionals in higher education to be equivalent to that of most persons who have received the Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration. Regardless of Bill's general level of competence, however, he might be required to take a certain number of credit hours at the college to which he has applied, simply because the college requires, as many do, that the student satisfactorily complete a certain number of credits in residence in order to receive a degree. In general, a college will require that every student who receives a degree fulfill a residency requirement of at least one academic year. This would mean that the maximum amount of credit or recognition received for prior experiential learning would be equivalent to the first three years of the four-year program.

In the space provided on Worksheet C, on the following page, write a rough draft of your request for credit or recognition. Make your request specific as to the amount of credit or recognition you think you deserve and provide a written justification for your request using one or more of the approaches described above.

Worksheet C
Rough Draft of Request for Credit or Recognition

(Use the same numbers for the statements that you used in response to instructions on p. 35.)



Amount of credit or recognition requested for learning described in statement no. 1: _____

Justification: _____

_____

_____

Amount of credit or recognition requested for learning described in statement no. 2: _____

Justification: _____

_____

_____

Amount of credit or recognition requested for learning described in statement no. 3: _____

Justification: _____

_____

_____

Amount of credit or recognition requested for learning described in statement no. 4: _____

Justification: _____

_____

_____

(If you need more space, use the back of this sheet.)

VII Summary Of How To Put Together Your Portfolio

At this point, let us turn to the practical considerations related to pulling together the paper work to facilitate and support your request for credit or recognition. Generally, a college will recommend or require that you prepare a portfolio. Even in cases in which such a recommendation or requirement does not exist, it will be to your advantage to prepare a portfolio for the following reasons:

1. A fully developed portfolio will help you organize your thinking and planning to insure that you don't leave out something important.

2. A comprehensive and logically developed portfolio will help an evaluator to understand what you have learned, how you have learned it, and why you think you deserve the credit or recognition you are requesting.

3. If you keep a copy of the portfolio, you will find many important uses for it in the future, e.g., job hunting, self-analysis, etc.

The format of a portfolio depends on the policies and procedures of your college. Usually, a portfolio designed to facilitate and support a request for credit or recognition for prior experiential learning is composed of the following elements.

1. *A table of contents.*

2. *Your autobiography.* If you will be submitting descriptions of learning (see item 3 below), this section should be a *brief summary* of your list of significant life experiences because you will be providing fuller explanations of your experiences in connection with these descriptions. We are referring to the list you prepared in response to the instructions in Chapter II. The summary should be written in complete narrative form, not in outline form.

If you will *not* be submitting descriptions of learning, you should start with a summary of your experience and then move to specific significant life experiences. Throughout your autobiography you should make notations in parentheses concerning the documentation of your experiences that you will be providing in the appendix (see item 5 below) of your portfolio. Each document in your portfolio appendix should be numbered, and the notations in your autobiography should refer to documents by number. Also, if there is documentation that you are willing to make available but is not contained in the appendix, you should note this fact in the body of this section.

3. *Descriptions of Learning.* If your college, like most colleges, emphasizes awarding credit or recognition for learning rather than experience per se, this section will be a large part of your portfolio. In this section you will present the descriptions of your learning as formulated according to the discussion on Learning Descriptions in Chapter II.

For each subject area in which you claim learning, you should provide a sentence describing the nature of the learning. For each statement you should describe the experiences that have contributed to your present level of competence. This you did in accordance with the material presented in Chapter II. Follow the referencing instructions contained in the second paragraph of #2 above. Add to each description a brief statement of the results of any measurements that have been made of your individual competences. (This was discussed in Chapter V.) For each measurement statement, refer to the specific measurement report contained in the appendix of your portfolio. If you plan to develop the learning further while enrolled in college, you should note this fact in each case.

Some colleges do not expect all measurement of learning to have taken place prior to the presentation of a portfolio. In this section you may only need to propose how you would like to have your learning measured. You need to check the policies and procedures of your college in order to determine the appropriate information for this section.

This section should also contain a summary statement of your life and educational goals and how your prior experiential learning or competences relate to these goals. The purpose of this section is to let college officials know where you stand at the present time in terms of learning, where you hope to go in the acquisition of further learning, and the relation between the two. This will be a description of your degree program, as discussed in Chapter III.

4. *Specific requests for credit or recognition in relation to the college's policies and procedures.* This section will contain your evaluation of your experience and/or learning, as we discussed in Chapter VI. Depending upon the policies and procedures of the college, you should relate your prior experiential learning to existing courses, competence lists, etc. You should make a specific request for a certain amount of credit, advanced standing, or competence recognition in this section. Do not be reluctant to request the amount of credit or recognition which you think is appropriate.

5. *Appendix.* You should place actual documentation and measurement reports in the appendix. The guidelines for the preparation for these materials are contained in Chapters IV and V.

> *Your portfolio should look like college-level work: typed, well-organized and arranged, neat, and correct with respect to grammar, spelling, and punctuation.*

Once you have assembled your portfolio, you will present it to the appropriate college official or committee. At some colleges, the entire assessment process may be administered by an assessment center. At others, individual departments or instructors supervise the assessment process. At still others, a special nontraditional school or division does the assessing. Frequently, the assessment of prior experiential learning is handled in the same way that independent study is supervised at the particular college. It may be helpful at this point for you to review the nine steps in assessment presented in Chapter I to be certain that you have all the information you need on the steps to be taken next by you and by those doing the assessment. Take time *now* to find out when and how you will be informed of a decision concerning your request for credit or recognition and, if applicable, your propsed degree program.

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Appendix A
Two Sample Lists of Significant Life Experiences

Sample 1: Life Experiences List*

The purpose of this exercise is to give you the chance to list all the major experiences of your life so far. This will provide you with "raw data" for later analysis.

Begin the list when you first left school or went out on your own and continue right down to the present. Any experience may qualify, but if you have difficulty deciding, think of those lasting for at least a month. Some areas to consider are: jobs, volunteer work, special training, raising children, travel, good books read, hobbies, personal encounters, or formal education.

Below is an example of what a list might look like, in part.

DATES	EXPERIENCE	COMMENTS
Summers and 7/58 - 9/60	Worked with pulp cutting crew and lumber company	Learned how hard it is to make a living!
10/60 - 12/63	U. S. Army Signal Corps	Went in a private and came out a sergeant.
1/64 --------	Fell in love and married my wife	No comment.
1/64 - 3/64	Took course in real estate brokering and law; passed examination	I think this was when I began to want to get someplace in life.
1/64 - present	Joined Westmont Methodist Church and began working with the aged.	This started me thinking about other people for once!
4/64 - present	Began selling real estate on the side; this eventually developed into my own small firm.	
8/68	Had our first child; read Dr. Spock cover to cover and everything else we could find.	This had to be one of the most important things that ever happened to me.
10/70	Had our second child; didn't read a thing.	Ditto
5/67 - 7/67	Went to Mexico with church group and stayed on later.	Gave us a chance to practice our Spanish; awful food, but nice people!

*Courtesy of the Community College of Vermont

Sample 2: Adult Life Chronologue*

Directions: Using the following pages, build a chronologue (time-line) of your life, starting with some point you would call "adult" and ending with the present. The point at which you begin is up to you. It could be when you graduated from high school, or when you got your first job, or when you were first "on your own." Wherever you start, build a time-line that lists in order the experiences that you were involved in at certain time periods in your past. Some of these experiences may have occurred over long periods of time. Some may have been very brief. Some probably occurred during the same time period as others, for example a 6-month trip during a 5-year job experience. List as many experiences as you wish. The idea is to get at as much experience as possible - so be generous with yourself. No one but you need see this. Here is a sample of what a portion of someone's time-line might look like:

Dates	Experience	Comments	Type of Experience
1948	Worked in photo shop	Flunky in the print shop	Work
1949-1951	Worked in photo shop	In lab--printed, developed pictures, did some customer service	"
1950-1951	Sang in choir		Community
1951	Waitress for 3 months	To get extra money to get married	Work
1951-present	Married		
1951-1955	Air Force "wife"	San Antonio, Illinois, Denver	Family
1951	Units' control clerk 3 months	Hated it	Work
1951-1952	File clerk--about 1 year	Processing orders at Lackland Air Force Base	Work
1952	Taught Sunday School	5th graders--fun	Community
1952-present	Mother	3 children	Family
1953	Took English course	Got an "A"!	Education
1953-1954	"Welcome Wagon" hostess	Part-time--9 months	Community

*Courtesy of Capitol Higher Education Service

Appendix B
Sample Learning Statements*

I know advanced principles and techniques of accounting and can use these well enough to keep books for a small business.

I know the principles and techniques of bowling and can apply these well enough to maintain an average score of 160.

I know the principles and techniques of personnel management and can apply these as an assistant personnel officer--specifically: record keeping, office management, affirmative action, and grievance procedures.

I know the history and methods of social change relative to black Americans--specifically: a survey of civil rights organizations, educational opportunities, and religious organizations.

I know the basic concepts and skills of community organizing and can function as a community advocate well enough to be employed in a county welfare office.

I know the basic principles and procedures of still black-and-white photography and can produce work at a level to rank in the top 30% of that submitted in the Twin Cities Amateur Photography Contest.

I know the basic principles and techniques of interviewing and can apply these--specifically: establishing rapport, eliciting information, probing without creating resistance, communicating clearly.

I know the roles and functions of Girl Scout, Camp Fire, and 4-H programs in preparing participants for citizenship roles at a level equivalent to the average adult supervisor of these groups.

I know the basic history and methods of fund raising for civic organizations at a level equivalent to the top 20% of volunteer personnel attached to the United Way.

I know the theories of abnormal personality development and therapeutic approaches commonly used in dealing with deviant behavior at a level equivalent to that normally achieved by third-year undergraduate students in pyschology.

I know the basic principles and skills of reducing information written in technical language to lay language and can apply these well enough to make information in divorce education textbooks usable to volunteer workers.

---

*Adapted from materials of Metropolitan State University with permission.

I know not only the interrelated physical, psychological, social, and spiritual dynamics of chemical dependency as they relate to individual clients and the family social structure, but also the general approaches to the tasks of prevention and treatment well enough to function as an entry-level counselor for the chemically dependent.

I know the major options in religious beliefs found in the U.S.A. and can apply this knowledge to personal life well enough to be able to present accurate, consistent, and logical arguments to support my own beliefs.

I know the basic principles and techniques of assisting children in physical development and can apply these at a level equivalent to a teacher in a group-day-care center.

I know and can apply the principles and techniques of management and finance well enough to develop a departmental budget for a school district.

I know the principles and methods for preparing, presenting, and administering federal grants and can apply this knowledge in nonprofit organizations at a professional level.

I know and can use the theories, principles, and procedures of comprehensive urban planning well enough to be employed as a professional urban planner.

I know and can apply the legal and behavioral approaches to private sector collective bargaining, including labor law and contract administration, well enough to do actual union bargaining.

I know the principles and techniques of behavior modification and can apply techniques in an elementary school classroom well enough to be employed as a school aide.

I know the theories and techniques of dream interpretation on an amateur level.

I know the horticultural principles and techniques related to organic gardening and can apply them in the creation of my own amateur graden.

I know the principles and methods of literary analysis in relation to modern American literature and can apply this knowledge in writing analytical essays on the works of Hemmingway, Faulkner, Steinbeck, and Henry James.

I know the anthropological methods and theory in relation to the Malagasy culture and can apply this knowledge in writing an article published in a professional journal of anthropology.

Sample Learning Statements (Cont'd.)

I know and can apply the principles and techniques of administering emergency medical treatment at a chemical dependency treatment facility at a level equivalent to a beginning counselor.

I know the historical development and current status of anti-trust law in relation to price fixing, monopolization, and mergers and can apply this knowledge at the level of a middle manager in a large company.

I know the theories and research techniques of literary history in relation to poetry and can apply this knowledge in writing critical analyses of the development of T. S. Eliot's poetry.

Appendix C
Guidelines and Diagrams for Writing Competence Statements

Writing Your Statements*

What is a good competence statement?

A good competence statement describes your learning in terms of what you know or can do. It should be clear, specific, and observable. It should also describe a skill or knowledge that can be applied in more than one situation. And finally, a good statement should be written in such a way that you can readily demonstrate the competence to another person.

Why good statements are important

Helping students to identify what they have learned and provide evidence is at the heart of learning how to learn. Since we are focusing on what was learned rather than how it was learned or taught, it is most important that you be able to provide evidence that you have learned. To do this, it is necessary to describe the learning in a way that can be observed and evaluated.

How to do it

The easiest way to write good statements is to go from the general to the specific. Start a sentence with:

I have learned that.....
I know about.....
I learned how to.....
I understand.....

Then, make it more specific by asking yourself,

"What can I do that would show someone else what I have learned?"

Some words to try

Here are some words that might help you be more specific in developing your statements.

Social	Manual/Physical	Intellectual
participate	hike	write
establish	knit	identify
trust	compete	design
rapport	sew	develop
give a talk	type	organize
interview	run	determine
counsel	sing	predict
help	strum	create
cooperate	ski	combine
perform	swim	expand
volunteer	contort	define
relate		

*Courtesy of the Community College of Vermont

COMPETENCE STATEMENT SHEET (sample)*

Name _____

Credits requested 4

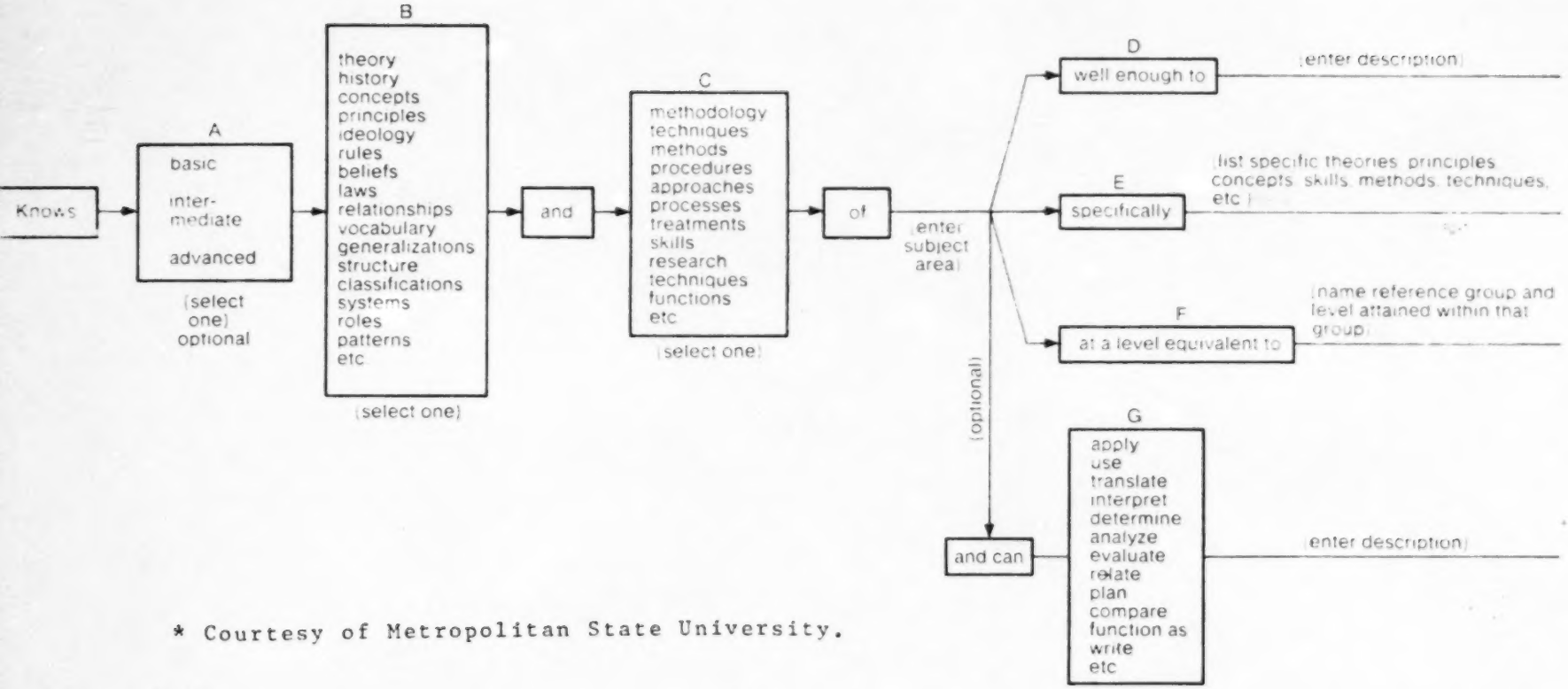
Subject Area Communication

STATEMENTS OF COMPETENCE	LEARNING EXPERIENCES
I. I can communicate effectively in oral form A. I have interviewing skills 1. I determine right questions to be asked beforehand 2. I can put the other person at ease 3. I can ask for information clearly B. I can give talks to small groups so that 1. people understand what I'm saying 2. people are interested and ask questions	Volunteer work and training workshops with Planned Parenthood Interviewing, by Parnes (book list) PTA President Church Missionary work
II. I can communicate effectively in written form A. I can write reports and papers that are 1. grammatically correct 2. organized clearly 3. interesting to read --etc. -	"Women in Literature" (WCC) Paper on Emily Post as radical feminist.

*Courtesy of Community College of Vermont

Steps in Writing a Competence Statement *

1 Enter subject area
2 Select one from column B to identify theoretical aspect
3 Select one from column C to identify practical aspect
4 If appropriate, select one from column G or use appropriate verb, complete description of how knowledge is applied
5 Identify level of competence by selecting one from column A and/or completing D, E, and/or F



* Courtesy of Metropolitan State University.

Appendix D
Guidelines for Evaluators

Measurement Results

for

Evaluation of Prior Experiential Learning*

1. Student _____

2. Competences evaluated:

3. a. Name and relationship (supervisor, peer, subordinate, etc.) of person measuring the competences: _____

_____

b. Qualifications for measuring the student's competences:

_____

_____

_____

4. Technique(s) used to measure the competences (interview, situational observation, product assessment, etc.):

5. Results of the measurement:

_____ _____

Date Signature

*Courtesy of Whatcom Community College

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Vermont State Colleges

Office of External Programs
Box 823
Montpelier, Vermont 05602
(802) 828-2896

Dear Friend:

You have been asked to write a letter on behalf of a student who is seeking college credit for prior learning. The Office of External Programs is offering students the opportunity to receive college credit for learning acquired outside of the classroom setting, on the job, or in life experience. Your letter will help the student provide evidence that the learning which he or she asserts actually did occur and is worthy of college credit. These guidelines are intended to help you provide the verification and evaluation of the student's learning in the best possible way.

1) Send your written evaluation on letterhead stationery.

2) Include a description of your present position and pertinent past experiences.

3) Identify your relationship to the candidate (e.g., supervisory), the situation in which you have observed him or her, and the dates of the observation.

4) State specifically which competence, skills, or knowledge you are assessing (in most cases, the candidate will inform you of these in advance).

5) Evaluate how well the person performed by using statements such as: average, above average, exceptional, etc.

6) Verify that the student held the position and fulfilled the responsibilities claimed.

7) Use examples, wherever possible, for the standards you have used, such as: performed at the same level as my other employees who possess a bachelor's degree; performance exceeded all other volunteers under my supervision who have performed these same or similar duties.

If you are not sure which skills, knowledge, or competence ssess, please feel free to ask the student to be more cific. It is important to know that you are not being asked to

make a recommendation. That is, we are not asking you to make comments on the student's appearance or deportment, nor are you being asked to make a prediction of the student's future performance. Rather, you are asked to verify that the candidate has learned and to evaluate how well he or she knows or can do what has been asserted.

This information will be public and the candidate will be provided with a copy. Therefore, your statement will be most helpful both to the student and to the committee, if it is entirely straightforward. We wish to thank you in advance for taking the time to provide as thoughtful and candid an assessment as possible.

Sincerely yours,

Myrna R. Miller
Coordinator of Assessment
Services

MRM:if

Courtesy of Vermont State Colleges.

Appendix E
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Southern Illinois University
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University of Alabama
University of Massachusetts
University of the State of New York
Vermont State Colleges
Whatcom Community College
William Rainey Harper College

CAEL STUDENT GUIDES

Learning and Assessing Interpersonal Competence—A CAEL Student Guide	$3.00
Assessing Prior Learning—A CAEL Student Guide	$3.00
College-Sponsored Experiential Learning—A CAEL Student Guide	$3.00

A list of other CAEL publications is available upon request.